Those vile VILLAINS and the heroes who loved them!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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CBM CONTENTS

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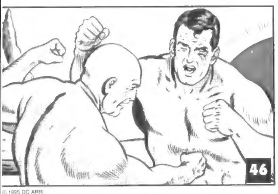

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ON THE COVER:
Daredevil battles one of the Golden Age's most famous villains... THE CLAW! This original painting was rendered by the great C. C. Beck of Captain Marvel fame and maybe the only time the artist applied his talents to Lev Gleason characters. The design is made even more effective by making the image of the Claw appear larger than the New York skyline and placing Daredevil strategically atop the Statue Of Liberty.

DAREDEVIL AND THE CLAW © LEV GLEASON
PAINTING COURTESY THE JOHN SNYDER COLLECTION

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Issue Number #31, January 1996

UNPLEASABLE?

As I ponder the complex problems facing our hobby, I almost always turn to grading as a primary area of concern. The value of comics continues on its upward spiral, and that means that there will be more and more temptation to "overgrade". All of fandom is acutely aware that describing the condition of a book accurately is becoming more critical. This is especially true when you consider that the cost of a book in Very Fine can be thousands of dollars higher than the cost of the very same book in Fine.

In trying to understand this issue, I think it's important to consider several inherent problems with our present "system" (or lack thereof) and the collectors who use it... problems that I'm not sure will ever be completely resolved.

First is that there is no standard... other than the fact that every single collector has their own standard. As many of you know, Carter's first rule of grading states that "different defects have different aesthetic value for different collectors" and if human nature is any guide to behavior, then it is unlikely that this will ever change. If you agree with my "rule", then it's easy to see that in a real sense there are as many grading systems as there are collectors. It's like everyone trying to communicate but speaking a different language. (This important idea of "individual variation of standard" is proven over and over again during every AACC Grading Committee session.)

The problem above is further complicated by a second concern, that of the very physical nature of a comic book. Many forget that comics are the most complex paper collectible to grade. This enigma is further exacerbated by the fact that comic book collectors are (generally) the pickiest and strictest graders in all of paper collectible fandom. Talk to anyone in pulps, movie posters, paperbacks, etc. and they will tell you that comic book collectors usually drive them crazy discussing (arguing about?) condition. Some paper memorabilia dealers even refuse to handle vintage comics because of our "unpleasable" reputation.

It could be the fact that our grading system was a bad fit right from the start... we borrowed it from coin collectors back when grading wasn't so serious. Even the word "mint" is grossly inaccurate... it really should be "Print" not mint.

I also see a tendency in some to over react to grading as if it were a way to bolster their ego... "Strict" graders verses the "other" graders. I'm still not sure what a strict grader is, unless it is someone who strictly adheres to their own personal system. I have yet to meet a fellow collector who strictly adheres to my personal system! (I also feel that undergrading is just as inaccurate and erroneous as overgrading.)

It's not that my standards have been relaxed, although they have "mellowed" some over the years. In anything, my grading standards are much more exacting and consistent than ever before... and I'm still convinced that no one becomes a really consistent grader until they have graded a minimum of one million books!

But I have relaxed what condition I will accept. As the years roll by, I'm less and less concerned with condition and value, and more appreciative than ever of what the books contain and teach. Maybe you reach a point where the "rat race" and arguments about the minutiae of grading is less important than simply enjoying the books for what they are. With present value and demand what it is, I often feel lucky to have any copy of certain rare books, almost regardless of condition.

Just a few thoughts... let me know what you think about the present state of grading in our hobby. I hope to hear from you soon...

Gary

Gary M. Carter

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Tuska Please

A quick FAX to let you know how much I am enjoying the return of CBM. It continues to get better & better. The best compliment that I can offer is that after every issue I spend another couple of hours doing research to answer questions that have arisen from the articles within. I love it!

One request, if possible, could you please print an article or interview with one of my favorite but under appreciated artists of the Gold/Silver period - George Tuska. Thanks,

Stan Taylor, Florida

Your wish is our command! See the Tuska interview in this issue!

Fandom in Louisville

Happy to let you know that after quite a bit of discussion and procrastination, fandom in Louisville, Kentucky has begun to organize. As you know, I was hoping to form a group based here in Louisville that I could be involved in first hand. In early June we held the first meeting of the A.C.E. (Association of Comic Book Enthusiasts). Our goal was established that evening: "to learn more about the history of the comic book as an art form and the people who created them!"

Our greatest problem however, is the lack of access to this information. We are in desperate need of anything pertaining to comics-from the earliest examples of the pre-GA to the Bronze Age! Any Xeroxes and photos, poor, brittle, or incomplete comics, indexed information, articles, and research that Fandom is willing to share would be most appreciated. This is because no member of the A.C.E. has the funds needed to purchase or assemble an entire library of comics. (Harry Thomas of Nashville, Tennessee, has already made an incredibly generous and greatly appreciated donation of Golden Age comics to the A.C.E.)

We can not do this alone and I hope that Fandom will share their information, expertise, and love of the art form with the A.C.E. Our mailing address is: A.C.E., 549 Denmark St., Louisville, KY 40215. Thanks for the chance to address your readership and for publishing the only magazine for true fans of comics.

Shawn Hamilton, Kentucky

Murray Ward Writes!

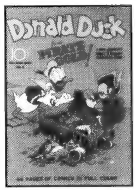
Just obtained the complete set of your CBM back issues from #22 up and have been catching up on what I've missed. Wow! Aside from the stuff pertaining to values and rarities being of little interest to me, this is one nice zine! I like practically all the articles and regular departments! They don't make many fanzines like this anymore! If I can scrounge up some spare time, which is in short supply these days, I'll write something for submission...unless your pages are all filled up for the foreseeable future, of course.

Anyway, so far I'm only a few issues into the stack, and while the good things far outweigh the bad, there is always room for improvement, so I hope you won't mind a little constructive criticism.

Issue #23 - In Scott Shaw's "Oddball Archie" piece, his calculations get tripped up by one little digit. The Archie's hit single SUGAR, SUGAR came out in 1969, rather than 1968. Shaw postulates that the hit song led to the Archie Show, the original animated series featuring Archie and the gang as a rock group, but actually it was the other way around.

The Archie Show debuted in the fall of 1968, together with their first album and their first single, BANG SHANG-A-LANG b/w THE ARCHIES THEME (the same formula Don Kirshner had used to launch the Monkees in '66). They sold well enough to be followed by a second single, FEELIN' SO GOOD, a few months later, which didn't do nearly as well. Then, in the summer of '69 came single #3, SUGAR, SUGAR, which was a huge hit.

Interestingly, the timing between the show and the comics hit a minor snag with Hot Dog, a new character created for the show who began to turn up simultaneously in the comics. The problem was that the cartoon cast Hot Dog as Jughead's pet, while the comic



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writers and artists, not yet having seen the show, presumed him to be Archie's pet, and a fair number of stories presented him as such before they realized their mistake.

Also in issue #23, Steve Gentner in his Flash article seems to be under the impression that all of his favorite Flash tales were written by Gardner Fox. Actually, while Fox created the Golden Age Flash, he only wrote one that was the failed attempt to revive the Three Dimwits in #117. After #123, he returned to write most of the "Double-Flash" stories with Jay Garrick and wrote a fair number of others, as well. But the Flash's main scribe who wrote all the early stories (except for one story in each of the SHOWCASE issues by Robert Kanigher), all the first appearances of the Rogues' Gallery villains, and all of Gentner's favorites except #123, was that unsung hero, John Broome.

And just to nit-pick, in issue #22, the reason Superman's "S" is reversed in the centrefold is obviously because this illo is a reversal of the cover of DC 100-PAGE SUPER-SPECTACULAR #13, which had the heroes flying in the opposite direction.

That's all for now. Please excuse me while I wade into the remaining issues. I'll let you know if I find any more nit-pick along the way. In the meantime, this is for the most part great stuff, and I've subscribed of course, so I'm with you for the long haul. Yours truly,

Murray Ward, Manitoba, Canada

Defending Wertham?

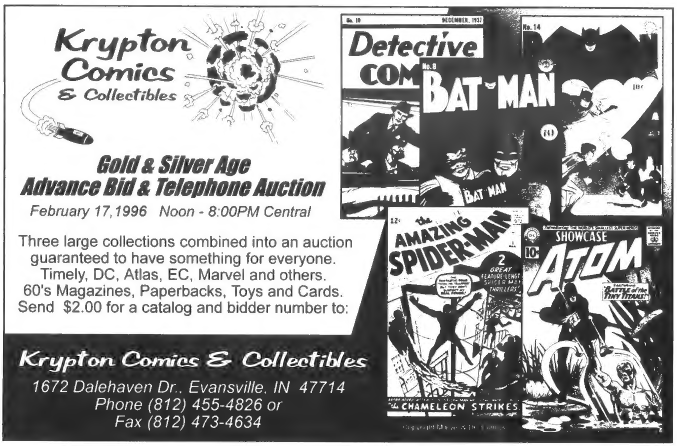
The comic book controversy of the fifties has always fascinated me. Nicky Wright makes some interesting points in his essay "In Defense of Dr. Wertham" (CBM #29). Wright is obviously an authority on Wertham and has read much of his work. I am no expert, but I have read Seduction of the Innocent.

Wright maintains that Wertham did not want "total prohibition," but wanted to protect children from harmful comics. Yet Wertham's definition of harmful was pretty broad, and he once proposed that children under fifteen be prevented from purchasing comic books. In a CBM interview, Comic Code Administrator Leonard Darvin states that Wertham seemed to want "to destroy the whole damn industry."

Full-fledged censorship may not have been Wertham's goal, but censorship was indeed the end result of his long campaign. The Comics Code Authority curtailed the free expression of writers and artists. The ostensibly voluntary compliance by the publishers was a reaction to the threat of legislation. EC publisher William Gaines initially refused to join the Code, but found newsstands reluctant to carry non-approved material, although they evidently carried Dell and Gilberton titles. Rather than conform to Code standards, Gaines canceled the EC line of comics (Incredible Science Fiction was briefly Code approved, but Gaines soon canceled it as well). All this turmoil and suppression was given birth by Dr. Fredric Wertham's ceaseless crusading and exaggerated propaganda.

While I might disagree with some of Nicky Wright's views, I always enjoy his writing. He is a knowledgeable comic book historian and I look forward to his future articles. Sincerely,

Timothy M. Walters, Oklahoma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World's Finest #30

Regarding your position on grading... I've been a collector for many years now and I've bought comics from dealers all over the States. I find it much easier for me if they grade with a "+" or a "-." I find that a book usually graded with a VF/NM is maybe a VF or VF+ but not a NM-. Dealers grades vary enough as it is without adding to the problem.

My vote for greatest cover is any early World's Finest, with my favorite being #30. You can feel the excitement of being on that hook and ladder with Batman, Robin and Superman. Thanks and keep this great book coming!

Rod Matlack, Colorado

Thank You Nicky Wright

Comic Book Marketplace just seems getting better and better. I've just received the Casper cover issue #29 and it's great. This month's focus on the horror comic was very appropriate to your showcase article by Nicky Wright (and to the month of October). I can't think of a magazine article that has held me as enthralled as Wright's piece on Fredric Wertham. I had no idea Wertham was an accomplished psychiatrist, not that he was such a hard working liberal. One has to admire the efforts he made on behalf of those who had very few other resources to turn to. I'm sure other readers were as surprised as I was to hear that Wertham had been associated with great progressive leaders like Clarence Darrow and Paul Robeson.

Wright gives us a very balanced view of the issues and it is to his credit that he recognizes the fact that while many adults read comics, there is no separate marketing of comics to children and adults. (Even today most comic book stores I shop in separate out only the sexually explicit comics as "adult.") Wright goes on to enumerate many comics that contain repulsive, repugnant, obnoxious, or horrifying elements.

Most of us are very well aware of the fact that these comics exist. Many of us would agree as well that a parent should be very concerned about what his/her child reads. Wertham's writings were a wake up call to parents to become more aware of the potential for comics to frighten or even overwhelm children.

No one has been able to satisfactorily establish, however, that there is a causal connection between reading certain comics or books and later violent behavior. This issue is still being debated with very little empirical evidence to show for all the opinions and positions taken. Wright's article correctly points out the value of warning to parents implicit in Wertham's concerns. But did Wertham prove or even substantiate the claim that comics can cause juvenile delinquency? Of course not! Wright's article closes with Wertham's own concession that, "Comics are not the disease, they are only a symptom."

My argument is not whether comics are valuable or worthless, not whether comics are good or bad, not whether comics are repulsive or sublime, that is up to each reader to decide. The government is not a party to one's decision as to what to read. Senator Hendrickson's threat to the comic book industry, however, was one of censorship. Censorship stops everyone from reading a given work, not just children. I'd need a lot of hard evidence showing real social damage caused by written material before I'd agree to censorship. And there just isn't such evidence.

The CMAA code presented us with material for a study that might resolve this whole issue. Most scholars agree that horror titles virtually disappeared after the introduction of the Code and that violence in comics was dramatically reduced, almost eliminated, exactly as Wertham and many others wanted. Did that have any effect on the rate of juvenile delinquency in our society? If horrifying, violent, exploitive, or simply "bad" comics caused delinquency then the elimination of these comics should have been followed by a drop in the rate of juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency and all crime have, unfortunately, become progressively worse in the United States in the four decades since the introduction of the CMAA code. Wertham's eloquent pleas remain of great historical interest but do not represent rational justification for censorship of comics or any written medium.

Thank you Nicky Wright for such a powerful, controversial, and well written article. I'd like nothing better than to see more such writing in CBM. Sincerely,

Collin Alscher, California

Bravo CBM #28!

Just the sight of the name Steranko in print generates a feeling of excitement in me. An anticipation of creative, quality work. It's a feeling I've had since childhood. When I saw the name on the cover of CBM, I knew I was

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going to pick us this issue, and when I saw "Returns," I knew that the wait was over, the time to correct this incredible feeling of wasted potential was coming to an end.

I am one of the legion of fans mentioned in the interview. Other comic book geniuses have left their impression on me, Eisner, Crandall, Toth, but I grew up with Jim Steranko—from SHIELD to the Shadow paperbacks; Captain America to Chandler—and to me he is the best. I've never thought of him as an enigma, however. It was always understandable that a person of his diverse talents and interests wouldn't put up with the inferior working conditions of the comic book world of those times. Who would if they didn't have to?

As far as his rather secretive persona, anyone who really takes a look at his work history should make the connection between the intended mysterious nature of the magician and Steranko's approach to publicity. Whenever I see David Copperfield perform, I think to myself that if Steranko were 20 years younger that would be him up on that stage. For every interview turned down, for every fraction of light shed on his past, for every interview rarely granted, he knows the effect on his image and has weighed it carefully.

It has at times, however, been sad for the comic book world, and personally annoying that Jim's been away for so long. Its just that there are a lot of movie magazines around, yet very few Comic Art giants, and only one Steranko. For not only is he a great artistic talent, but almost as importantly is that he is our greatest historian. How many other people can you name who knew almost all the key players in comics history from inception to the present day? And unlike other historians, had a total rapport with his subjects because he had excelled at the same discipline?

Issue 28 of CBM will be a treasured possession for decades. Thanks for bringing one of my fantasy/profile/interviews to life. Bravo!

I eagerly await publication of Steranko's return. We need a completion to "The History of Comics," and an active, but never contented James Steranko in this field. I hope the projects come fast, furious, frequently, and are as rewarding for him as they will be for all of his fans. Its about time! Sincerely,

Andrew Glaess, Colorado

Cheerful Nolan Nit-Picks

CBM No. 29 was such an enjoyable issue that it sparked me to comment on a few items in it.

In Mark Arnold's entertaining article on Harvey horror comics, Black Cat #29 is listed as the first horror issue. Actually #29 is all Black Cat stories, and even the "Witch of Salem" in the lead story turned out to be phony. The horror series really began with #30 (Black Cat was on the cover only). It became Black Cat Western for three issues in 1955 #54-56, with Black Cat in costume for mostly western-themed stories (at least some of which were reprints). Regrettable, Black Cat did not last until 1963, as the article suggests. What happened was the title became Black Cat Mystery with #57 and Black Cat Mystic from #58-62. These contained some nice fantasy and science fiction issues... but alas the series ended early in 1958 (I remember buying them off the stands). Then, in 1962-63, Black Cat story reprints were issued in three Black Cat 25-cent giants, #63-65. At the time, I had never seen the original Black Cat comics, and I remember thinking how out-of-place the stories in #63-65 seemed, since I didn't know they were reprints.

Regarding reader John McDonagh's letter about super heroes who survived well into the 1950s, I feel it should be noted that Daredevil was long since gone from his own Lev Gleason title, although the title (and the strip of his partners, the Little Wise Guys) did last into 1956. Daredevil last regularly appeared in #69 (December 1950), although he did make a brief comeback in 1951 in issues #79 & #80. As far as I know, he didn't appear at all after that, even though the comic retained the title Daredevil for its entire run.

Also, not only did Vigilante survive into the mid-1950s, but so did Robotman and Johnny Quick among the DC stable, in addition to Green Arrow and Aquaman. And, even though Daredevil wasn't really a mid-50s survivor, another Golden Age character that McDonagh didn't mention was Quality's Dollman, who lasted in his own title through 1953 (no less)!

The "original" costumed hero Witness did, indeed, appear in Mystic #9 (May 1941) of the first series as well as #7 and #8.

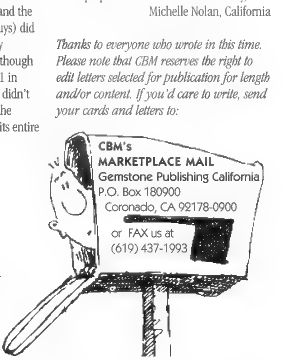
Nicky Wright's informative article on Dr. Wertham was one of the best I've seen. There's one small nit to pick (which I will cheerfully pick): the first Code-approved comics hit the stands no later than January of 1955 (not April), since all of DC's monthly issues dated March were the first of that company to carry the code symbol. I may have seen one or two February dated issues from various companies with the Code symbol, but I can't recall right off. I do know that most companies began using the code symbol with March and April issues. I used to write the date that I bought every comic at the top of the first page (in ink, no less!), so I have the original dates of purchase (which almost always were the dates they hit the stands) for many comics from the late 1950s and early 1960s. In DC's case, comics dated, say June-July went on sale late in April and comics dated monthly went on sale two months earlier.

I also enjoyed Greg Wasko's article on the schlock horror title Mysterious Adventures. Did you know the bottom half of the logo (for the first two issues only) was exactly the same as DC's Strange Adventures, which was first on the stands several months earlier? It was only the first two issues though; I wonder if DC objected?

Keep up the wonderful work! Sincerely,

Michelle Nolan, California

Thanks to everyone who wrote in this time. Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send your cards and letters to:



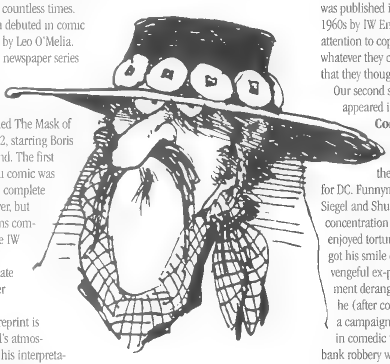
BAD GUYS!

IN THE HISTORY OF COMICS IT IS RARE FOR A VILLAIN TO BE THE STAR OF A STRIP OR A COMIC BOOK.

BY PAT S. CALHOUN

One of the most impressive comic books devoted to an evildoer was the 1951 Avon adaptation of **The Mask of Dr. Fu Manchu**, by Sax Rohmer, illustrated by the great Wally Wood. This 25-page novel is one of Avon's "Fantasy Classics". The bad doctor is perhaps the most famous fictional villain of the 20th century. Sax Rohmer's inscrutable creation began his reign of terror in 1913, and since then many Fu Manchu novels have been published (and reprinted) countless times.

In 1931 Fu Manchu debuted in comic strip form, ably drawn by Leo O'Melia. (Some strips from this newspaper series were reprinted in *Detective Comics* #18-#27 in 1938-1939.) Hollywood filmed The Mask of Dr. Fu Manchu in 1932, starring Boris Karloff as the arch-fiend. The first full-length Fu Manchu comic was the 1951 Avon edition, complete with a glitzy Wood cover, but financial considerations compelled me to accept the IW reprint pictured here, which offers an adequate rendition of the sinister doctor.



The interior of the reprint is faithful enough. Wood's atmosphere is tangible, and his interpretation of Fah Lo Suee, Fu Manchu's beautiful eminently voluptuous daughter, is torn between her love for her father and her attraction to the Englishmen who oppose him. The Rohmer plot structure usually takes a young man and a young woman and teams them up with a Scotland Yard agent against some insidious genius. In the Fu Manchu books, Sir Denis Nayland Smith is the champion of law and order who matches wits with the Oriental mastermind. The Rohmer recipe (followed here) has Fah Lo Suee in competition for the young man's affections as best she can without coming into too great a conflict with Fu Manchu's expectations.

The story itself revolves around Fu Manchu's attempt to steal some ancient relics being transported to London. Nayland Smith has replicas made of the original antiques, and then a game of switcheroo begins. Smith's schemes are undermined, and it is discovered that Fah Lo Suee has hypnotized his assistant! Like all of the popular pulp writers, Rohmer's specialty was headlong action, charging forward paragraph by paragraph, however convoluted the plot. And like most series novels, the resolution leaves room for a rematch.

The combination of that narrative drive with Wood's elegant rendering adds up to a worthwhile adaptation. The 6-page back-up story, featuring Flash Harper, camera-toting, crime-solving newsman, is notable only for effective art by A. C. Hollingsworth. It's the same strip that filled out the Avon edition. This reprint was published in the late-1950s or early-1960s by IW Enterprises. IW paid little attention to copyright laws... pirating whatever they could get their hands on that they thought might sell.

Our second star is a villain whose strip appeared in the 1944 **Cisco Kid Comics**, published by an early "indy", Bernard Bailey, an artist who drew the Hourman and the Spectre for DC. Funnyman (no relation to the Siegel and Shuster creation) was a Nazi concentration Camp commander who enjoyed torturing his victims and later got his smile carved into his face by vengeful ex-prisoners. This disfigurement deranges him to the point where he (after coming to the USA) launches a campaign of violent crime, clothed in comedic trappings. (Remember the bank robbery where Funnyman uses a "special" laughing gas on the bank employees and unlucky customers that doesn't wear off... and they all literally die laughing?) It's similar to the "who he is and how he came to be" of the Joker (whose origin had not been written in 1944) and definitely makes a fascinating

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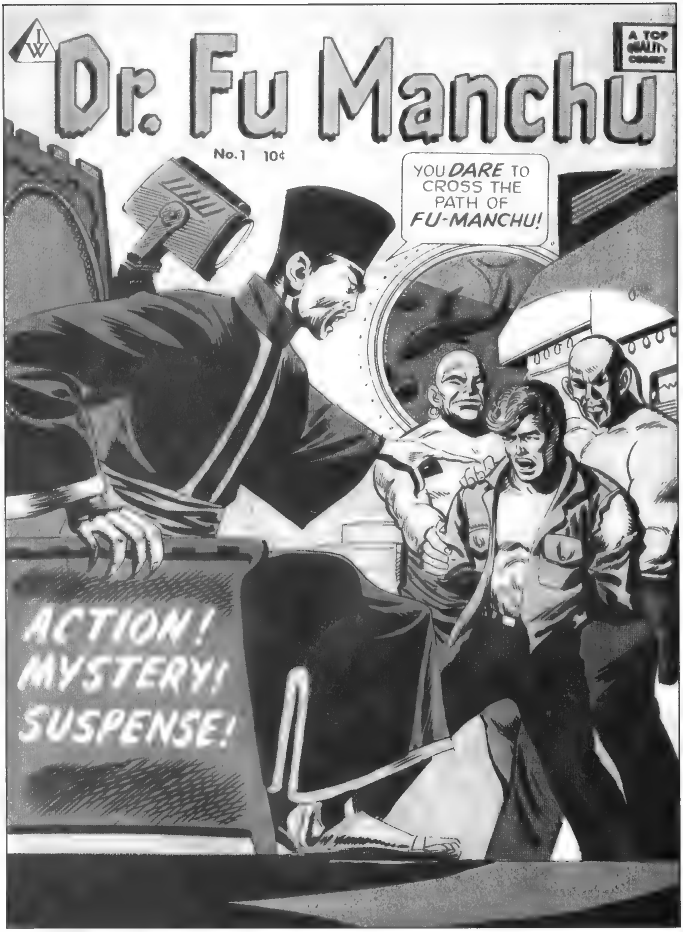
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motivation for a super-villain. It's amazing that this 1944 tale anticipates the postwar situation with such accuracy. This episode does little more than introduce the character, but there is a world of potential here, that as far as I know, was never developed further.

This wonderful comic book also includes a Cisco Kid story, an adaptation of the Faust opera, and a small hero called Superbaby, whose 5-page origin is told in rhyme! The cover is the work of John Giunta, who also did the Funnyman art.

Our third infamous feature is a villain who during the 1940s was (as R. C. Harvey recently pointed out in *CBG*) as purely evil a cold-blooded murderer as comics had to offer. But by the time Iron Jaw got his own strip in the 1950s, he was reduced to playing the patsy in con games contrived by his nemesis, Sniffer, another character who'd been around for many years and through many changes. In these later stories, although both Sniffer and Iron Jaw are still criminals, the tone is tongue-in-cheek. Creator/writer/cover artist Charles Biro was as adept at humor as he was at melodrama.

The Iron Jaw story from **Boy Illustories** #88 (April 1953) has Sniffer rigging up elaborate demonstrations of good luck that he attributes to a magic charm which he offers to sell to Iron Jaw. The charm is actually an ancient Egyptian statuette that puts a bad luck curse on its owner! And, after buying it, Iron Jaw suffers a hilarious run of misfortunes and pratfalls. But Sniffer's luck runs out too, at the tale's end. It's an amusing story from an entertaining series.

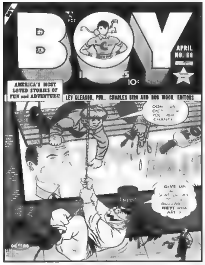
Boy #88 also has a Crimebuster yarn (Crimebuster having been Iron Jaw's original antagonist). Crimebuster was one of Biro's most enduring creations, and one of the best teenage crimefighters. This story is played straight, as Crimebuster tracks down a brutal killer who has had his fingerprints changed by plastic surgery. It's a solid tale, with the emotional involvement that's a Biro trademark. The art is by Norman Maurer, who worked for Lev Gleason for many years and drew some of the original Crimebuster versus Iron Jaw battles. Filling out the issue is an installment of the episodic space opera series, Rocky X of the Rocketeers. The two main features in Boy were good enough to offset this lackluster back-up strip. ■

Pat S. Calhoun has been collecting, researching, and appreciating comic books since the early 1960s, and is a nationally recognized comic book historian.

© BERNARD BAILEY

THIS CISCO KID BOOK (from 1944) is an obscure gem that contains an intriguing and diverse blend of strips, including an incredible super-villain, Funnyman.

DR. FU MANCHU was IW's unauthorized reprint (from 1958-1964) of the 1951 Avon Fantasy Classic, The Mask of Dr. Fu Manchu, adapted from the Sax Rohmer novel.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BOY ILLUSTORIES #88 (Apr 1953) shows Iron Jaw in trouble as Sniffer prepares to send him to the pavement. Inside the "O" of the Boy logo are Crimebuster and his monkey, Squeeks.

Remembering

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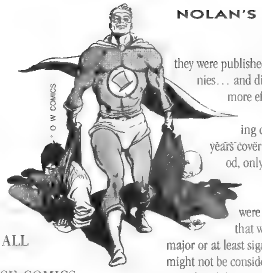
ONE-SHOT WONDERS!



By Michelle Nolan

If you're captivated by the covers of Golden Age comics, surely you have seen them as you've leafed through the pages of the *Gerber Photo-Journal*. Just call them the comics no one remembers.

Among the thousands of articles in the mainstream press covering comic collecting in the past three decades, collectors, dealers, celebrities, and the man on the street all have been quoted about how fondly they recall their favorite titles and characters.

But have you ever heard anyone recall how he used to take a flashlight to bed to read about the exploits of the Duke of Darkness? Have you ever read how anyone's pulse used to be set racing by the adventures of Captain Wizard? Has any female reader ever recalled how she was inspired by Commandette?

Of course not.

They're part of an era in comics that, almost quite literally, nobody remembers. Fifty years ago, however, during a two-year period that began about a year before the end of World War II, the likes of the Duke of Darkness, Captain Wizard, and Commandette competed for space on the newsstands (or at least tried to) with the "real super folks" everyone recalls.

There were many obscure and soon-to-be forgotten strips of all sorts in mainstream super hero comics, of course. And there were several smaller publishing houses, turning out heroes who lasted a few issues and vanished forever.

What we are talking about here, though, is a strange phenomenon that seems doubtless related to the paper shortages common during the second half of World War II, and connected to the way several art studios frequently produced and packaged comic books for tiny publishers who otherwise wouldn't have been able to get anything on the stands at all.

JUST ABOUT ALL OF THESE COMICS WERE NOT ONLY PUBLISHED IN THE MOST HAPHAZARD FASHION POSSIBLE, BUT MOST OF THEM CONTAINED CHARACTERS SO LACKING IN CHARISMA AND PIZZAZZ (NOT TO MENTION GOOD ARTWORK AND COMPREHENSIBLE STORIES), IT'S DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THAT ANYONE WOULD THINK THEY WOULD SELL.

Few collectors and historians realize that the newsstand comic books of the 1934-43 period have been much better documented than those of the 1944-46 era! The reason is simple: not only are there a lot fewer comics to document for the first 10 years of their existence, but they were published by far fewer companies . . . and distributed in a much more efficient way.

Here's an interesting concept . . . in the five years covering the 1939-43 period, only 34 original newsstand comic books, give or take a couple, were published by outfits that wouldn't be considered major or at least significant! (Centaur might not be considered major today, but it produced dozens and dozens of significant comics.) These tiny early publishers include Progressive, Great, Bilbara, Hawley, Nita, Sun, Hyper, and Gernsback (minor only in the comics sense). None lasted beyond 1942. (I'm counting Brookwood as part of Harvey because of a seamless continuation.)

But during the 1944-46 period, not only did a raft of smaller publishers pop up, such as Spark Publications (*Green Lama*), Rural Home (*Blazing Comics*), William H. Wise (*Cryin' Lion*) and Civil Service (*Flyin' Jenny*), but more than 50 one-shot and two-shot comics from truly obscure sources found their way onto the newsstands.

These are the comics no one remembers, at least from the standpoint of nostalgia and/or collectibility. Were it not for Ernie Gerber and the *Photo-Journal*, they would still be virtually totally unknown, except to a handful of collectors who have sought out these truly obscure comics.

Never Say Never

The accompanying list is not necessarily all-inclusive; I've learned that when you're dealing with 50-year-old pop culture, you never say never. But it's virtually complete with regard to the tiny publishers and true obscurities of that era.

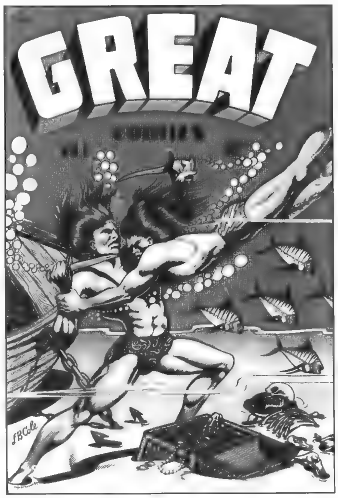
The ground rules for inclusion were simple. No comic book could have more than three known issues; no book could come from a publisher with a known output of more than a few comics; the book had to have been published from 1944-46 (or at least strongly believed to be, based on the content of the stories and ads, etc.).

This eliminated comics from tiny but significant publishers such as those above (they deserve their own article, anyway, one that I will present in a future issue of *CBM*).

This is not to say that *Cannonball Comics* from Rural Home in 1945 (starring the immortal Crash Kid) isn't just as obscure as *Mad Hatter Comics* from O.W. Comics in 1946. But I had to draw the line somewhere, and whereas Rural Home was a small but legitimate publisher of several titles, *Mad Hatter* (by the much better known Bill Woolfolk and Mort Leav) was O.W.'s only title in 1946.

Incidentally, *Mad Hatter* #2 isn't shown in Gerber, having been published eight months after the first issue of this Batman-like hero and thus probably super scarce.

Have you ever seen one? Now you have! By the way, it's a lot better than you might think, but what in the world were they doing when they created a costume hero by that name? Can you just imagine a youngster breathlessly announcing to his best buddy, "You ought to read the newest issue of *Mad Hatter Comics*! It's really swell!"



BURIED TREASURE seems to be the motive for the L. B. Cole rendered underwater drama on the cover of *Great Comics* #1 (1945).

ONE OF THE MORE BIZARRE titles ever used on a comic book, *Mad Hatter* #2 (Sep/Oct 1946) continues to be one of the most hard to find 1940s hero books.

DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE

Well, that's why this installment of Nolan's Notebook has been written. Just about all of these comics were not only published in the most haphazard fashion possible, but most of them contained characters so lacking in charisma and pizzazz (not to mention good artwork and comprehensible stories), it's difficult to imagine that anyone would think they would sell.

Indeed, some of these comics resemble little more than the crudzine art of two or three decades later, in the dear old unsophisticated days of fandom.

Take, for example, *Lucky 7 Comics* published circa 1945 by an outfit known as Howard Publishing, apparently the same people who published Larch Books. This truly obscure one-shot is not only loaded with various ads for Larch Books, but it has some of the worst art and dialogue ever presented in a comic book, especially on the super hero strips "Congo Raider" and "Punch Powers". It's almost painful to read—but, of course, that's what makes it fun to collect. I think I paid $2 for it 15 or 20 years ago, and I've never had the chance to buy another copy.

COMMANDETTE

In contrast, Cambridge House produced three comic books circa 1945, and they're all pretty good—128-page giants entitled *Star Studded Comics* and *Gold Medal Comics* and a regular-sized humor book entitled *Hurricane Comics*. It was in *Star Studded Comics* that I first (and last) met up with Betty Babble(!), otherwise known as the Commandette, a female costume hero of some merit and style. Alas, that was to be her only Golden Age appearance.

Also in *Star Studded* is Captain Combat, an early super hero strip by John Giunta, one of the major artists for the Bernard Baily Studios (who packaged the three Cambridge House books). And that leads us to a pair of one-shots from Bailey's Swapper's Quarterly, entitled *Cisco Kid* and *Tally-Ho Comics*. Tally-Ho, of course, is well known for the first appearance of art by Frank Frazetta, who as a high school student shared

The 1944-46 Explosion of One-Shot Wonders

an art credit with Giunta on the little-remembered one-shot humor strip "Snowman".

The Bernard Baily Connection

The Baily studios packaged a character known as the "Duke of Darkness" for three one-shot comics circa 1945—*KO Komics* from Gerona, *Top Spot Comics* from Top Spot, and *Triple Threat Comics* from Special Action. What connection, if any, these companies have is lost in the mists of time, but the Duke of Darkness turned out to be a direct knockoff of National Comics' Spectre strip, which already had temporarily gone to the great comic land in the sky by the time the Duke of Darkness made his temporary appearance.

The connection, of course, was that Bernard Baily was the first artist to draw the Spectre, beginning in 1940 in *More Fun Comics*. The Duke, it seemed, didn't have a ghost of a chance and vanished into the ether when the war ended.

A few of the books on our list of the truly obscure were pretty nice items, indeed, including the likes of the World War II comics *Tailspin* and *Ship Aboy*, both dated November, 1944. They were the first of a few items to come from a Chicago firm known as The Spotlight, and at the top of both comics was the banner "The Ten Cent Comic Book Series". Considering that virtually all comic books cost 10 cents in 1944, one can only speculate about what that out-of-touch editor must have been thinking. But then, some comics from the 1940s advertised stories "in full color", so I suppose the 10-cent claim wasn't so strange, after all.

Tailspin featured the only appearance of a super hero known as The Firebird. A pretty splash page didn't live up to expectations, however.

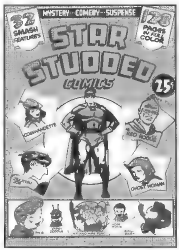
More than two dozen super heroes enjoyed their only fights and/or flights on the pages of the comics on this list. In one case, that of Regor Company's *Atomic Thunderbolt* one-shot dated February 1946—doubtless inspired by the recent invention and use of the atomic bomb—the *Overstreet Guide* for many years listed a #2, as well… driving a lot of collectors nuts until we realized that #2 simply doesn't exist. (Or does it? Never say never...)

Let me say at this point in comic collecting

Little-known comics by minor publishers

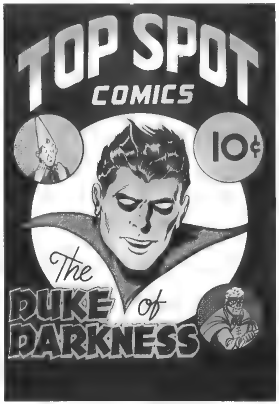
All Comics (1945) Chicago Nite Life News (not in Gerber)
America in Action (1945) Mayflower House
Atomic Bomb (1945) Jay Burtis
Atomic Thunderbolt (Feb 1946) Regor Co.
Bee-29 Bombardier (Feb 1945) Neal Publication (funny animal)
Bingo Comics (1945) H.C. Blackerby
Captain Wizard (1946) Croydon
Cavalier Comics (1945) Sture Ashberg
Children's Big Book (1945) Dorene Publ.
Circus Comics #1 (Apr 1945); #2 (June 1945); Farm Women's Publ. Co. (funny animal)
Chuckle Comics (1944) Leffingwell (funny animal)
Cisco Kid (1944) Swapper's Quarterly
Conqueror Comics (Win 1945) Albrecht
Courage Comics #2 (1945); #77 (1945) J. Edward Slavin
Dime Comics (1945) Newsbook Publications (Silver Streak reprints)
Federal Men Comics (1945) Gerard
Funland Comics (1945) Croydon (funny animal)
Funnybone (1944) La Salle (funny animal)
Gem Comics (Apr 1945) The Spotlight
Gold Medal Comics (1945) 128-page giant, Cambridge House
Great Comics (1945) Novack (three versions known, same cover
Hi-Lite Comics (Fall 1945) E.R. Ross
Hollywood Comics (1945) New Age Publications (funny animals)
Hurricane Comics (1945) Cambridge House (funny animals)
Jamboree Comics #1 (Feb 1945) through #3 (April 1945) Round Publishing (funny animals)
Jeep Comics (Win 1944) Spring 1945, Leffingwell, #3 is dated March/April 1948
KO Komics (Oct 1945) Gerona Publ.
Latest Comics #1 (Mar 1945); #2 (1945)
The Spotlight (funny animals)
Lucky '7' Comics (1945) Howard Publishers (Larch Books)
Mad Hatter Comics #1 (Jan/Feb 1946); #2 (Sep/Oct 1946) O.W. Comics
Medal of Honor Comics (Spring 1946) Stafford Publishing
Merry Comics (Dec 1945) Carlton (humor)
Merry Go Round Comics (1944) La Salle (funny animals)
Merry Go Round Comics (1946) Croydon (funny animals)
Meteor Comics (Nov 1945) Croydon
Miss Cairo Jones (1945) Croydon
Navy Heroes (1945) Almanac Publ. Co.
The Nebbs (1945) Croyden
Pop Pop Comics (1945) Leffingwell (funny animals)
Sharp Comics (Wint 1945, Spring 1946) H.C. Blackerby (not in Gerber)
Ship Ahoy Comics (Nov 1944) The Spotlight
Skyrocket Comics (1944) Home Guide
Snappy Comics (1945) CIMA Publications
Spitfire Comics #132 (Aug 1944); #133 (1945, Malverne Herald)
Spotlight Comics #1 (Nov 1944); #2 (1945); #3 (1945); Our Army
Spook Comics (1946) Bernard Baily
Star Studded Comics (1945) 128-page giant, Cambridge House
Tailspin Comics (Nov 1944) The Spotlight
Tally-Ho Comics (1944) Swapper's Quart.
TNT Comics (Feb 1946) Charles Publishing Co.(Charlton predecessor)
Three-Ring Comics (Mar 1945) The Spotlight (humor, funny animals)
Top Spot Comics (1945) Top Spot Publ.
Topsy Turvy Comics (1945) Leffingwell
Triple Threat comics (1945) Special Action Comics
Twinkle Comics (May 1945) The Spotlight
Warrior Comics (1944) H. C. Blackerby
Witty Comics (#1 and #2, 1945)
Rubin/Chicago Nite Life News
World Famous Stories (1945) Croydon
Zoom Comics (Dec 1945) Carlton Comics

Newsstand comics listed from 1944-46 include those by publishers who never got established beyond the bare minimum or who ever published more than three consecutive issues. In many cases, dates are best available estimated or based on contents of the comics.



A 128-PAGE GIANT *Star Studded Comics* (1945) is one of the most difficult square-bound books to locate.

A SPECTRE "CLONE" called The Duke Of Darkness by Benard Bailey, is the star of *Top Spot Comics* (1945).



history, we don't uncover too many undiscovered issues. But it does happen, rarely, and so we ought not to be too insistent. The problem develops when some folks insist that misinformation is based on valid research. In other words, there is no known *Atomic Thunderbolt* #2, and there is no reason to list one in the *Price Guide* (it's now listed as a one-shot). But that doesn't mean that a #2 is impossible. On the other hand, it's highly unlikely that an entire series of comics has eluded all of us after all these years, which leads me to .

Witty Comics from Chicago Nite-Life News, has no date but contains strips copyrighted 1945 (and looks very much like a 1945 comic book). Gerber pictures #1 and #2 and I have included them here, but the *Price Guide* still lists #'s 3–7. I have never seen any of these, and if they do exist, then I haven't been very amusing to list "Witty" as a total obscurity. Has anyone out there ever definitely seen or collected any issue of *Witty* after #2? Please let us know. By the way, the cover on #2 is one of the most outrageous in the history of comics—it shows two men, a little boy and a dog all staring at a body (the butler?) falling out of a coat closet. This one brings new meaning to the cliché "coming out of the closet"!

In one case, that of *Great Comics* from Novack in 1945, a beautiful L.B. Cole underwater fight cover is used to mask the mediocre contents of three different comics, as detailed in *Overstreet*. In my copy, the indicia has been blacked out but the title is clearly visible: "Knockout". In other copies, *Barrel O' Fun* is the title blacked out. Of course, it's not unheard of for World War II era publishers to have run out of paper but to have saved the printed covers. In two instances, that of the covers from Rural Home's *Blazing Comics* #5 and #6 and *Red Circle Comics* #4, the covers were placed on a wide variety of coverless comics from the 1950s. Something fishy there, indeed!

Getting back to the atomic bomb, a comic book by that title was released circa 1945 but we have no idea if it was before or after the bomb. At 32 pages, I suspect it may have been a rush job created to take advantage of the news. It was published by Jay Burtis, whoever that was, and contained Airmale and Stampy, who also appeared in the CIMA Publications one-shot *Snappy Comics* from the same era. Those nicely named characters, of course, enjoyed a goodly run during the 1940s from Crestwood's *Prize Comics*.

Almost DC

And finally... *Spotlight, Skyrocket, Dime Comics, Hi-Lite Comics*, and four obscure "almost DCs".

Bingo, Cavalier, Federal Men, and *Warrior Comics*—contain pre-hero DC reprints. For the price, usually only a few dollars, they're well worth it. *Cavalier* contains a nice early Creig Flessel strip.

The two titles packaged by the Chesler shop (using, I suspect, mostly reprints) were *Spotlight* #'s 1–3 and the *Skyrocket* one-shot. Because they were published by Our Army and Home Guide, respectively, I don't consider them "true" Chesler books. Chesler collectors, of course, still would want them, because they contain the same characters and art styles as regular Chesler books. By the way, Chesler published a lot of obscure one-shots in 1944-45, but they aren't included here simply because Chesler was a "significant" comic company.

Dime Comics was published by Newsbook circa 1945, and contained Silver Streak reprints. It may be connected to Lev Gleason, which published the preceding regular Silver Streak series... but I can't make a direct connection, and thus it appears here as a one-shot curiosity.

Miss Shady, the six-page saga of a beautiful bad girl who was badly drawn indeed, highlights *Hi-Lite Comics*, the only comic book ever to appear from E.R. Ross Publications.

Where did these things come from and why do I continue to pay good money for them? But seriously, folks... if you like obscure collector's items, these are worth your consideration. You probably won't have to pay much for most of them, and they're generally interesting, if not very good.

And you can bet your fellow collectors probably won't have one either! ■

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an interview with

George Tuska

1950s horror... Buck Rogers... Superman... Captain America... Iron Man... The legendary artist and writer, George Tuska, has done it all!

George Tuska today.

(Opposite) **A close-up of Tuska's dynamic and vital rendition of Thor from the splash page introducing *Iron Man* #66 (Feb 1974).**

GEORGE TUSKA IS ONE OF those invaluable comic book artists whose career stretches through the Gold, the Silver, and the Bronze ages. He has worked for most of the major publishers and has a well-deserved reputation for being a capable craftsman, an exciting storyteller, always meets deadlines, and a nice guy! Born April 26, 1916, in Hartford, Connecticut, George's earliest interest in drawing began at the age of eight. He pursued formal art education: National Academy of Design and was inspired by illustrators in the Saturday Evening Post. George Tuska was first published in 1939 while he was with the original Eisner & Iger Studio.

"My fondest career related memory was seeing my first comic book art work on the newsstands... and my favorite project was writing and drawing the Scorchy Smith daily and Sunday newspaper strip."

The following interview is a detailed journey through a life devoted to comic art.

John Coates: *Before drawing professionally, did you draw for any local periodical or local school publication?*

George Tuska: Not really. I only drew for personal enjoyment. Around 1936 I started art school in New York; the National Academy of Design.

Coates: *Any particular reason you chose this school?*

Tuska: Not really. At the time I had a friend who was a sculptor and lived in New York. He recommended it.

Coates: *While attending art school, did you work with other art forms?*

Tuska: Well, I was employed by a cosmetics company and designed jewelry. Other than that, I first began drawing professionally with comics books.

Coates: *Did you attend art school with the comic book industry as your original goal... or did you view comics as a way of getting into an advertisement agency or newspaper strip?*

Tuska: Well, I always knew I wanted to draw; though at the time, I hadn't decided how to make a living at it. Originally, I was simply looking for work and comics kept me busy! {laughter} Once I began working in the medium, I became deeply involved and enjoyed it immensely. It was a great outlet for not only my art but it allowed me to create, as well.

Coates: *Once you had graduated, how did you find work in the art field?*

Tuska: Being young and new to New York, I didn't have a personal agent. With the Depression, any work was tough to come by. Around 1938, I felt confident enough that I could draw professionally, so I began using a professional artist employment agency. These agencies would keep your portfolio on file. Different publishers would use these agencies to recruit young, inexpensive artists for specific projects. If you were lucky, the publisher would eventually hire you full time.

Coates: *Was it here that you became involved in comic books?*

Tuska: Yes. While at an employment agency, the Eisner & Iger studio had seen my portfolio. They later contacted

ka by John Coates

1995 MEG ARR

me to submit additional samples. I guess they liked my work because they hired me. It was at the Eisner & Iger Studio that I decided to draw comic books for a career. Being my first real professional art assignment, I found that I loved the creative atmosphere of the industry, the studio, and the actual work. Drawing has always been in me... very fulfilling.

John: *Even though you worked directly for the Eisner & Iger studio, your work was published by numerous comic book publishers (e.g. Brookwood/ Speed, Fox, Fiction House, Quality, and Fawcett to name a few). Could you briefly explain how the old studio system allowed this to come about?*

Tuska: Sure! In the early days, publishers would farm out their work to a studio like Eisner & Iger. The publisher would either specify what type of strip they wanted or leave the ideas up to the studio. Most of the time, the publishers would ask that the studio turn out work similar to whatever character was popular at the time... and the studio would then create the strip.

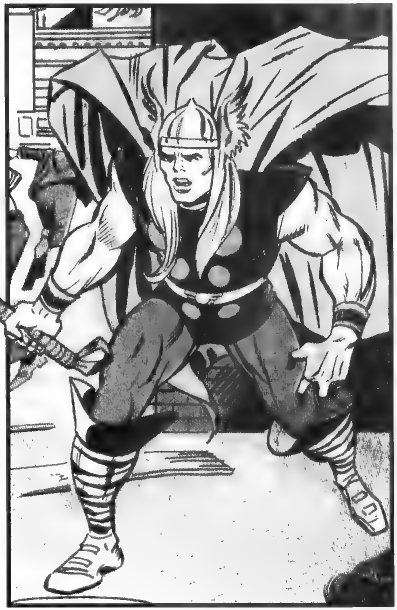
The creation, writing, penciling, lettering, and inking was all done "in house", within the studio. Once it was completed, the studio would supply the finished work to whatever printer the publisher designated.

Under this system, a publisher could actually have their competitors' comic books being created, written, and drawn beside one another... in the same studio by the very same creators!

Also, in the studio system an artist could produce work for a publisher... yet never have any contact with that publisher.

Coates: *Do you see any advantages to the old system?*

Tuska: Not really... I prefer today's freelancing. Though you sometimes miss the camaraderie of other artists, freelancing allows more freedom to work at your



own pace and conduct research on your subject. The privacy is also nice.

With the studio system, you came into the office from 9:00 a.m. to whenever the work was completed. You would come to work, sit at your desk in a room with other artists and draw, regardless of your creative mood. It was fun but it was also easy to get distracted. Like any office environment, it was sometimes tough to concentrate on your work with other people in the room, talking, etc. And when you couldn't concentrate, it only made the work more stressful because you would get behind on your deadline!

Uncle Sam #3 (Summer 1942)- A handsome cover for Quality Comics' inventive and inspiring super-patriot.

G. T. turned in a stunning sci fi splash panel for this fine flying saucer story from *Strange Tales* #18 (May 1953).

Coates: *What was the first character you worked on at Eisner & Iger?*

Tuska: That would have been "Spike Marlin". They liked the way I drew it so they gave me another character, "Shark Brodie". Both were adventure-at-sea stories. Both characters had boats, fought South-Sea natives, pirates, and sharks… and both sought undersea treasure and the like. They were great fun.

Coates: *Do you recall "Cosmic Carson", "Wing Turner", and "Zanzibar the Magician"? You drew them for Fox Publications.*

Tuska: I created both the "Zanzibar" and "Carson" characters. Both were standard adventure fare and fun to draw.

Coates: *What was the actual process of creating strips at the studio?*

Tuska: In my case, Will [Eisner] and I would outline the plot. From that, I would complete the story, pencils, and inks. I would then hand off the finished pages to be lettered, and so on.

Coates: *Some have conjectured that Mr. Eisner would go over all the work to give it a "house" style. Did he?*

Tuska: Usually he never changed the work. Will would always make sure you knew what he wanted before you began to draw it. He had confidence in the people he hired and was very supportive of us.

Coates: *What's your favorite type of story to draw?*

Tuska: I prefer adventure, crime, action, and science fiction stories. I tend to draw the types of stories that interested me as a child… stories with lots of action!

Coates: *What method do you use… working from a story synopsis or a panel-by-panel script?*

Tuska: I prefer drawing from a story synopsis. I can then dictate the flow of the story and story layout. Working from a strict panel by panel script, is confining and boring. I feel it limits the imagination and creativity of the drawings.

Coates: *Do you ever assist the writer with the plot?*

Tuska: Sometimes… it depends. If the plot and story are good, I usually stay fairly close to the script. Regardless, I draw what I like as long as it follows the plot.

Coates: *What was the working atmosphere in the Eisner & Iger Studio?*

Tuska: Fun… but demanding! The camaraderie with the other artists was fun. We were all young, new to the business, and artistically "hungry." The demanding part was the workload. Being a studio, we had contracts with different publishers, all wanting the work as soon as possible. I always felt that we were given too much work without the hours to complete it, or at least do quality work. But that's business. At the time, I just appreciated working.

Coates: *Who were some of the other artists in the studio?*

Tuska: Some of the greats. Lou Fine, Bob Powell, Charlie Sultan, Nick Viscardy [Cardy], and John Celardo to name a few. Being deeply involved in our work… and working in such close quarters… we had much in common. We became friends. I guess it's the nature of the work

I remember that Bob Powell was always a very fancy

'995 MEG ARR

THE SAUCERS STRIKE!
OUT THAT STAR GAZING SON! WE AIN'T GOT NO TIME FOR TOM-FOOLERY WE GOT CROPS TO TAKE CARE OF!
LOOK, POP! ONE OF THOSE FLYING SAUCERS AND IT'S MIGHTY CLOSE!
ONE OF THE STRANGEST TALES EVER TOLD!
GT

dresser and always had to be up on the latest fashion. Of them all, Lou Fine was the artist I admired the most. I think he was the most talented of the bunch. He did beautiful work with Japanese brushes and inks… and was very dedicated.

Coates: *How long did you stay at Eisner & Iger?*

Tuska: Until 1941 when I was drafted.

Coates: *Where were you stationed?*

Tuska: I was stationed in Columbia, South Carolina at Fort Jackson. I was assigned to Division 100. I worked in the HQ, drawing plans of artillery equipment for an army book of "manual artillery". The drawings were used to teach troops about the equipment and were very technical work… but not very challenging. It was nothing that creative. I eventually lost the hearing in my left ear in a training accident. That's when I received a medical discharge in 1943

Coates: *Did you go directly back into drawing comic books?*

Tuska: Yes. I did work for Fiction House, Street & Smith, Chesler, and a few others.

Coates: *Was it difficult to find work during WWII?*

Tuska: Not at all. With the war, most of the men who had drawn comic books had been drafted and artists were scarce. I simply called up Fiction House and was hired. It was strange, though, because most of the artists I knew had gone to war.

Also, as with most home-front duties, many publishers had hired women to draw their comic books. Though all the artists I worked with were talented, I missed that camaraderie from the pre-war studio days.

Coates: *Was it difficult to adjust to being a civilian after being in the army?*

Tuska: Oh, yes. Though I had experienced discipline in the army, I had fallen out of the habit of drawing comic books. That's a different type of discipline. Fortunately, it came back to me rather quickly! I've always loved to draw.

Coates: *When you returned to the comics field, did you return to the studio system environment?*

Tuska: For a while, but I then began to freelance from my home.

Coates: *From the mid-1940s through the early 1950s you seem to have had an affinity for working on crime drama and detective stories. The first work that comes to mind is your contribution to* Crime Does Not Pay, *published by Lev Gleason. Did you request this type of story assignment?*

Tuska: Not really. Charles Biro, a writer and artist who was best-known for his work on that book, simply handed me the scripts. Most of my *Crime Does Not Pay* work was written by Bob Bernstein. He was a pretty prolific writer and we worked well together. I guess they liked my work so I kept getting scripts! {laughter}

AP NEWSFEATURES

PM RELEASES FOR WEEKS OF AUGUST 16 AUGUST 23

SCORCHY SMITH *by George Tuska*

SCORCHY SMITH — Back Room Drama

Scorchy Smith went to Mars in the mid-1950s-written, penciled, and inked by George Tuska.

Coates: *Did you ever think they were too violent?*

Tuska: The stories were presented as fiction and in good fun. I always felt that the kids could tell the difference.

Coates: *How did you first meet Charles Biro?*

George Tuska in 1945.

Tuska: I met Charles while submitting samples and we became friends. He later became my boss at Lev Gleason and was in charge of *Crime Does Not Pay* among other titles. Now he's probably best known for his gruesome crime covers. In many ways, he was the first to really do crime-type comics, or at least make them popular. We kept in touch through the years until his death in 1982 (he had a heart attack while driving). Charles was a very gifted man.

Coates: *Who else do you remember during this period?*

Tuska: I did become close with Jack Kirby and Bob Powell. I also remember C.C. Beck, Jack Cole, Bill Elder, and Mort Meskin. All were very talented.

Jack Kirby was a true talent. I remember his work was always a little "on the edge" for the time. Not like an Eisner with page lay-outs, graphic design, etc... Jack would

AS TOLD TO
PETER DEPREE & JOHN COATES

COMMENTARY ON TUSKA

WILL EISNER George was quite a fine man. I still remember him very fondly. He was a very nice fellow and we got along very well. He was a quiet, big fellow... a big handsome man who worked at Eisner & Iger.

As a matter of fact, I refer to him in the book The Dreamer in one sequence where he punched out Bob Powell who made some remarks that angered Tuska! Tuska was a rather shy guy and I think there was a girl in the office that he was sweet on, and Bob Powell made a remark about that one day. This was in the shop while we were all sitting around, and George Tuska got up, very slowly and kind of sadly, and slugged Bob Powell. (Laughter.) Then sat down and apologized later. Said he was sorry he got angry, but he lost his temper.

He did not come with me when I did The Spirit. He remained behind. Tuska had a very, very clean style and a very, very pleasant style. His characters had a muralistic look to them. They were classically comics—a very clean, sharp, strong line. His characters always were good-looking characters and always looked very nice, very clean, and good-looking.

STAN LEE In the old days, many artists were fast, and a few were good. George excelled at both. I can't speak highly enough of him and his work. George was probably the most complete artist I ever worked with. And that includes everybody! George was not only a great artist, but he understood the reproduction aspect of the printed page. His lines were always just thin or thick enough... his blacks and shading were just right... so that nothing was lost in the printing. That's talent! I tried to get George on Spider-Man for years but he was always too busy but George did pinch hit on the Spider-Man newspaper strip more than once. He was always at the ready and I knew that if I were behind a deadline, I could depend on George, regardless of what he was working on!

JOE SIMON I was thinking of George Tuska recently and recalled that George and Bob Powell lived in Long Island... a town some ways away from my place in Woodbury. Both were of Polish descent. George, who lived South of me, was my "South Pole", Powell was my "North Pole". They did a lot of work for SICK Magazine and the other projects I was involved with.

I worked with Tuska for a long, long time. We were very good friends. In fact, My dog would bite him at least once a week!

We kept him busy for about fifteen years on SICK! It required an illustrative style, so he didn't have to modify his technique. He helped us on Young Romance and Young Love as well. He also worked with me on The Fly (late fifties) and The Shield in The Double Life of Private Strong (mid-fifties) 1959 or '53 for Archie Comics. He did a lot of work with us at Harvey too, including Spyman and Bee-Man. George painted a cover in oils for me once on a magazine called WEIRD and did a lot of inside work also. It was a black & white comic like the ones Bill Gaines used to put out at E.C. but I think ours preceded theirs.

George lived in Hicksville, Long Island. I was living in Woodbury. I don't remember how we first got together, but George was very happy to work us with because he would have only a ten-minute drive to my home to pick up the script and deliver the penciled and inked artwork.

Tuska was penciling the Buck Rogers comic strip when he started working *Continued on page 33*

put so much energy into each page... so much imagination and larger than life lay-outs. Jack was very well liked and respected... and big-hearted, too.

Bob Powell was a wonderful artist... and very technical with his drawings. We became closer when we both worked with Joe Simon on *Sick* magazine in the early 1960s.

Coates: *Other than Lev Gleason, what other companies were you producing work for at that time?*

Tuska: I worked with such publishers as St. John, Fiction House, Standard, Ziff-Davis, and Atlas.

Coates: *Any particular reason you worked so closely with Atlas Comics in the early 1950s?*

Tuska: Not really. I had been looking for work and showed Martin Goodman (the publisher) some samples. He was looking for experienced artists and hired me. Martin was a shrewd business man... but he could be difficult. All in all, I enjoyed working for him. That's where I met Stan Lee.

Coates: *How could Martin be "difficult"?*

Tuska: Nothing major. He was the publisher and boss, while I was the artist and employee. The nature of an artist is to always try and produce the best work possible, while the publisher has to get the books out the door on time and pay bills. Sometimes the artist is unrealistic, sometimes the publisher is... it was just your typical art vs. business concerns.

Coates: *What was Stan like back then?*

Tuska: Stan had been in the business in some capacity since the early 1940s. He was like he is today, just younger! {laughter} He was always enthusiastic and full of ideas. If I remember correctly, he wrote many of the Atlas stories.

Coates: *In the mid-1950s, the comic book market started downsizing. Did you stay in the industry?*

Tuska: No. The comic book market was no longer lucrative for publishers. Many simply decided to close shop. My last comic book work was with Martin at Atlas. With no comic book work, I was fortunate to find work with the Associated Press newspaper syndicate. This was around 1953. There I wrote, penciled, and inked both the Sunday page and dailies for the newspaper strip, "Scorchy Smith".

Coates: *At your peak, how many finished pages (written, penciled and inked, ready to be lettered), could you complete in a day?*

Tuska: Let me see. With comics, about two to three pages a day. When drawing for the newspaper strips, I would do a little more. Both instances really depended on the lay-out of the page.

Coates: *How many hours did you work in your average day?*

Tuska: Too long! {laughter}

Coates: *With comic books, what was your creative process?*

Tuska: Well, for a 28 page comic book story, I first divided the plot synopsis into "quarters"... seven pages each. As

each quarter was completed, I would return it to the publisher for approval. Any changes would then be done in the publisher's office. The pages would then be passed to the letterer, etc... I would then go back to my studio and complete the next quarter's worth of pages, and so on.

Coates: *And with your newspaper strip work?*

Tuska: Totally different process. When drawing a newspaper strip, you're limited in the sense that you only have three to four panels to work with. This can make it easier to lay out the page… or frustrate you. Remember, these strips were daily and needed to provide the reader with enough story to move along the plot. That can be difficult in three to four panels day in and day out. Anyway, I'd turn in a few weeks worth of-dailies at one time. This kept you ahead of the deadlines, but was very hard work.

Coates: *The strip "Scorchy Smith" was created by John Terry in the 1930s. For the sake of us "youngsters", could you briefly describe this strip?*

Tuska: "Scorchy" was pretty much your standard adventure strip. The hero was dashing and sort of a trouble-shooter. He fought criminals, hunted treasure, and, of course, always got the girl. {laughter}

Coates: *I believe Frank Robbins drew the strip prior to your arrival. Did you meet with him or John Terry to discuss the art or story direction of the characters?*

Tuska: I never spoke to John, but I did meet Frank. We discussed the strip in general terms, but with me writing and drawing the strip, it quickly became my own. Also, I feel sure they wouldn't have been hired on the strip if they did not have confidence in my slant on the work!

Coates: *In the early 1950s (while you were doing the "Scorchy Smith" strip for newspapers) the comic book industry was under siege and subject to Congressional Hearings. Dr. Wertham had accused comic books of causing juvenile delinquency. What do you remember about that time?*

Tuska: It was a very unfortunate situation. The entire comic book business suffered. A lot of very good artists were put out of work and hurt professionally.

© 1995 DC

Coates: *What was your opinion of the work being done at publishers like EC Comics?*

Tuska: I thought it was a little gory at times, but so was some of my crime comics work. This was the nature of the business. Gory, yes… but all in good fun. Certainly not to the point that it required Congressional Hearings.

Coates: *Why do you think this happened?*

Tuska: Well, during the 1950s comic books were mostly for children so I think the work seemed violent to many parents. Also, comic books were an easy, "beatable" target for the politicians. The industry was not considered "legitimate" and the publishers were not unified. Many publishers simply gave up.

Coates: *Did you know many artists who were put out of work?*

Tuska: Oh, yes, many. Luckily, most turned to advertising or other venues and continued to work. It was a scary time if you had a family to support.

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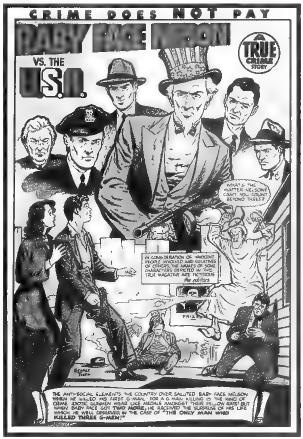

CRIME DOES NOT PAY
BABY FACE NELSON
VS. THE
U.S.
TRUE CRIME STORY
WHAT'S THE MATTER, YELLOW BELLY? CAN'T YOU COUNT BEYOND THREE?
AN EXAMINATION OF VARIOUS CRIMINAL CHARACTERISTICS REVEALS THAT THE MAJORITY OF CRIMINALS SUFFER FROM A DEFICIENCY IN THE NUMBER OF FINGERS
BANG!
BANG!
BANG!
THE ANTI-SOCIAL ELEMENTS THE COUNTRY OVER SALUTED BABY FACE NELSON, BRAVE OF BULLET AND THREE FINGERS, FOR A FITTING FINISH TO THE MAGNIFICENT CRIME SPREE. NELSON'S LAST WORDS WERE A MAGNIFICENT TRIBUTE TO HIS FELLOW GUNSLINGERS AND TO THE CODE OF THE UNDERWORLD. HE SAID: "I'M KILLED THREE G-MEN!"

Coates: *Was there ever concern among the syndicated newspaper strip artists that the hearings on comic books would eventually include an investigation of the newspaper strips?*

Tuska: Not at all. As an illustrated story, newspaper strips were always considered more reputable, and for all age groups. Again, comic books of the time were created, written, drawn, and marketed to children. That perception is the difference. Also, who would want to take on a newspaper syndicate? This was a time before television when newspapers were the only constant source of news and still very powerful. As I mentioned earlier, comic books were unfortunately an easy target.

Coates: *In the late-1950s, while still on "Scorchy Smith", you somehow found time to step back into the world of comic books and also draw for such publications as Archie Comics' Adventures of the Fly, Crestwood's Black Magic, and Harvey Comics' Alarming Adventures. When did you find the time?* {laughter}

Tuska's work for Gleason's *Crime Does Not Pay* is his best-remembered work from the mid-1940s. Here "Mr. Crime" rants at Baby-Face Nelson (from #52 1947).

Tuska's last work for Marvel was an adaptation of a movie starring "He-Man" (*Masters of the Universe* #1, Nov 1987).

Tuska: I did all that!? {laughter} Well, while on "Scorchy" I would get calls from publishers asking me to do short filler stories or back ups. Most were only four to six pages so it didn't interfere with "Scorchy". The extra money was also nice!

CRIME CASES
Private EYE
DANGEROUS ADVENTURES FROM THE PRIVATE CASE-BOOK OF ROCKY JORDEN
IN THIS ISSUE
THAT BLASTED WON'T HELP HER! SHE'S DRUGGED! I'M GONNA MOP UP THIS DIVE WITH YA
SAVE YER BREATH, LOUD-MOUTH. YA LL BE NEEDIN' IT SOON!
JUNG

Private Eye #2 (March 1951) Tuska's crime work continued after his move to Atlas.

Stan Lee reintroduces the "Golden Age Giant", George Tuska, in *Tales of Suspense* #70 (Oct 1965).

Coates: *In 1959, you left the "Scorchy Smith" strip and began to do the "Buck Rogers" dailies and Sunday page strip. How did this come about?*

Tuska: By that time I had been on "Scorchy" for about five years, and Maury Brickman asked me to do the Buck Rogers strip. Maury was an editor for Robert Dille, the national newspaper syndicate out of Chicago. It seemed that Murphy Anderson had been drawing the strip but was moving on. As Buck Rogers was a more popular strip than "Scorchy", I accepted.

Coates: *Did you discuss the Buck Rogers strip with Murphy Anderson prior to taking it over?*

Tuska: Not really. But Murphy and I had already known each other in the late 1940s when we had worked together for Fiction House. He is one of the best brush men in the business and his inking is very fine. . very deliberate. His lines are always just right, thick where needed and light in other areas. He is very well thought of in the industry by many new young artists. He deserves all those accolades. He's also a very nice person.

Coates: *How long did "Scorchy" survive after your departure?*

Tuska: I think it continued being published for some years, but I don't remember how many… or who took it over.

Coates: *Was the artistic process for the Buck Rogers strip similar to Scorchy Smith or your comic book work?*

Tuska: For the most part. I worked at home and both penciled and inked the series with no assistants. However, I always used a letterer. Howard Liss provided the stories, unlike "Scorchy" where I both wrote and penciled. With Buck Rogers I had little input into the plot and stories prior to drawing them.

Coates: *Was it a big adjustment to go back to drawing someone else's story?*

Tuska: I did miss writing. For five years on "Scorchy Smith" I had been a one man shop, except for the lettering. Nothing against Howard's scripts, but when I also wrote my own story I felt my illustrations were more complete.

Coates: *National Syndicate canceled the Buck Rogers newspaper strip in 1965. Did you immediately come back to the comic book field?*

Tuska: Yes. Once it was discontinued, I began to work freelance with Stan Lee at Marvel. I was working out of my home in Hicksville, New York. It's about 35 miles from New York City. About a month before Buck Rogers was to be canceled, I called Stan to see if he had work. He welcomed me with a script! I worked for Stan through the early 1970s. I have worked on and off for Marvel through 1987. My last work for Marvel was a "Masters of the Universe" motion picture adaptation comic book. That would have been on their Star Comic imprint.

Stan was a great inspiration and fun to work with. During creative meetings where plots were discussed, Stan would actually demonstrate the story as he proposed it! {laughter} Not only that, but he would act out the different characters to illustrate their personalities! Stan's a very energetic and fun guy.

Coates: *While freelancing for Marvel Comics, did you write any scripts?*

Tuska: No. At Marvel, I worked from a plot synopsis. Although I did provide input into writing by indicating dialogue in the margins for some of the characters. This was practiced by quite a few artists at the time. The nature of having to draw from plot synopsis makes it a natural progression to provide input. Stan wrote all the stories. That's why they were so well done and consistent. Stan just has that style and a flair for writing.

Coates: *During the mid-1960s at Marvel, your*

pencils appeared in a wide range of their titles like Tales to Suspense, X-Men, Ghost Rider, Hulk, Captain America, Daredevil, Iron Man, *and* Avengers, *to name a few. Any favorites?*

Tuska: Probably *Captain America*, he is a very dynamic and physical character. Lots of action and very heroic.

Coates: *Your work continued to appear across Marvel's line of titles, but the work that comes to mind most is your stint on* Iron Man.

Tuska: When I first began drawing "Iron Man", it immediately appealed to me. While the Iron Man persona was invincible, the Tony Stark character was very fragile. I liked the contrast. It was interesting that the invincible persona was held together by the fragile character. The Tony Stark character was also fun to draw… a very stylish look.

Coates: *During this period at Marvel, you began to do more inking and less penciling. Did you tire of penciling?*

Tuska: No. Nothing that dramatic. The main heroes were already scheduled with their regular art teams. Unlike today, Marvel didn't publish very many monthly books in the mid-1960s. While waiting for an opening, I inked for a while. As a matter of fact, I would rather pencil and have another artist ink my work. I feel more involved with what goes on the page if I do the pencils.

Coates: *Many pencilers say they would rather ink their own work.*

Tuska: Well, if time permits, so would I. But by having someone else ink my pencils I could draw more pages. Besides, I would never allow an artist to ink my work if I did not like the finished product.

Coates: *Around this same time (mid to late 1960s), your work began to again appear in Harvey Comics'* Thrill-o-Rama *and* SpyMan *comic books.*

Tuska: That came about through Joe Simon. I had known of him since the early days… but had never really known him personally. He liked my art and offered me work. I think I only drew a couple of issues and maybe a cover or two of the comic books. Joe also was publishing a "Mad"-type magazine called "Sick". We worked together for years on those and became very close personally. It helped that we lived fairly close to one another.

Coates: *What other Marvel artists did you become acquainted with?*

Tuska: Because I was working alone at home, I only met the other artists in passing or if they also happened to be in the office. I did get to know John Romita, Sr. fairly well. He was drawing Spider-Man at the time and is a fine artist. After John left that title, Marvel adopted his style as the Spider-Man "house style". It was a great compliment to his work.

Coates: *Aside from Marvel and Harvey comics, your work also appeared in Wally Wood's* Tower Comics. *How did that come about?*

Tuska: I just dropped in one day and was offered work! {laughter}

Coates: *Weren't you still freelancing at Marvel Comics at the time?*

Tuska: Yes. But many times I would finish my pages and the writer would be behind on supplying the script. While waiting for additional scripts from Marvel, I would drop by other publishers and try to pick up work.

Coates: *This brings us up to the late-1960s and early-1970s where you began to freelance for DC Comics as well as Marvel, correct?*

Tuska: Correct.

Coates: *Similar to Marvel, your work appeared across DC's line of titles. Your* Teen Titans *work, with Nick Cardy inking, comes to mind. That title has always been a personal favorite. Any thoughts on this work?*

Superman Sunday page from 1978 by George Tuska.

1995 DC
THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-HEROES
IN HIS SECRET LAIR, THE IMMORTAL VILLAIN BLOATS IN TRIUMPH...
SUPERMAN! FLASH! WONDER WOMAN! BATMAN!
VANDAL SAVAGE IS OBLIVIOUS TO SUPERMAN'S EFFORTS TO SAVE HIMSELF...
PULL APART
SUPER SUCTION
MELT THROUGH MOUNTAIN WITH HEAT VISION!
KRYPTONITE!
BLOCKING OUT THE APPROPRIATE RADIATIONS WITH...
...STEEL!
NOW TO FIND OUT JUST EXACTLY WHERE VANDAL SAVAGE HAS LOCATED CELIA'S SARCOPHAGUS!
SEARCHING THE AREA WITH HIS TELESCOPIC VISION, SUPERMAN SEES...
MACHINE GUN FIRE OF AN INCREDIBLE

Tuska: Well, I really have no interest in that work. Sorry.

Coates: *You had worked with Nick Cardy back in the Eisner-Iger studio in the late 1930s. How was it working with him again?*

Tuska: Very nice. Nick has always been a wonderful artist and a gentleman. I loved what he did over my pencils. His inking seemed to add to my pencils, without losing my style or the drawing's original intent.

Coates: *In 1978, you again left the comic book field for a newspaper syndicated daily and Sunday strip. This time it was the new Superman strip. How did that come about?*

Tuska: With the success of the Superman movie DC was developing a new Superman newspaper strip. At the time, Vince Colletta was the art-director for DC Comics. We had met in the early 1960s while working at Marvel. He called to offer me the new Superman strip. Vince was the principle inker for the strip.

Boy Comics #30 (Oct 1946) Tuska pencil and inks. Not listed in *Overstreet's Price Guide.*

CHEATED FLAMES
BOY COMICS HERO OF THE MONTH
A TRUE STORY
STICKING HIS DAD'S FURNACE HAD BEEN THE CLOSEST GEORGE NOR... IT --AGAIN, NOW, CAME TO FIGHTING FIRES UNTIL THAT UNFORTUNATE SUNDAY'S DAY WHEN HE SAW THE WILLIS FAMILY DIE HERE, FROM ATTIC TO CELLAR, WHAT HAPPENED THEN IS A TALE OF HARROWING HEROISM AND "CHEATED FLAMES!"
ONE FINE JUNE DAY
GEORGE RUN THE TRUCK INTO TOWN AND PICK UP A LOAD OF SEED AT THE GENERAL STORE
OKAY DAD! SOON AS I FINISH GIVING SAMSON HIS DRINK
OH! WHAT A SMELL, SAY! GUESS I'LL GO FISHING AWHILE. I'LL GET BACK
SLOW

Coates: *After a 15-plus-years hiatus, what were your impressions on returning to a newspaper strip? Had it changed?*

Tuska: A little. I think the biggest difference was that the scripts on Superman lacked real quality. I could never get interested in them. After five years I finally left the strip in 1983 and went back to doing comic books for DC.

Coates: *Around the mid-1980s your work in the comic book field became less frequent. Any particular reason?*

Tuska: I was tired. After over 50 years in the business, I decided to take it easy! {laughter}

Coates: *A well earned rest, I'm sure. What did you do during your hiatus?*

Tuska: I like to paint and on occasion I have done posters of comic book heroes for fans. I'm flattered that people remember my work.

Coates: *As mentioned earlier, in 1987, your last comic book work was the "He-Man" movie adaptation for Marvel Comics' Star Comics imprint. Any chance of a return to the field of comic books?*

Tuska: I would be interested. However, today it's a new field with comic book artists and their "styles". It seems that the artists from my era don't do much work these days. You begin to wonder! {laughter}

Coates: *Why do you think that is?*

Tuska: A lot of it is simply due to changing consumer tastes and attitudes. The young artists have different styles and moods to their work that seem to attract the teenage readers

Coates: *General impressions of the industry today?*

Tuska: A mixture of good, bad, and interesting.

Coates: *Some critics of today's comics feel that many of the artists lack a sense of sequential storytelling.*

Tuska: True. My feeling is that many of today's artists are more concerned with drawing figures with overdressed costumes. They seem to ignore the anatomically correct figure, sequential panel design, and lay-out of the page. The art of using the "art" to pace and move the story along is being lost. That's a shame… especially with comics getting more positive media exposure than ever. The design aspect is being lost. Instead of looking at the actual design and flow of the costumes, they draw all sorts of patterns, and heavy shading to hide the figure.

Coates: *Another trend in comics today is that all the characters and heroes seem "mean" and "un-heroic".*

Tuska: I think that's accurate. It seems all the scripts are violent and the characters mean and angry expressions… and are full of hate. To show some characters in this light is realistic. To have ALL the characters act this way seems boring and uncreative. The companies will say that this reflects the times we live in. If that's so, I would think that there would be no better time to show a

Tuska penciled and inked the cover to *Avengers* #48 (Jan 1968).

truly heroic character.

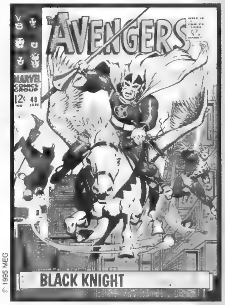
Coates: *How does this apply to your crime comics work?*

Tuska: I think the difference is that we always portrayed violence as wrong. Though we would show a violent act, the bad guys would always be caught and punished… or at the very least face some consequence. Today, all the characters are "bad guys", and the violence seems to be shown as a good thing, or as something you aspire to.

Coates: *One last question Mr. Tuska. Comic book artists also have more creative rights today than in past years. How would you suggest they use this to their advantage and build on those rights?*

Tuska: Use it to branch out into new areas and create different characters. Find your own Superman or Batman!

Coates: *I can't thank you enough for this opportunity. I feel fortunate that I was selected to conduct this interview. But even more importantly, I'm glad comic collectors and fans will have the opportunity to read about your amazing career.*



Tuska: Thank you. This brought back good memories. I can truly say that I never thought it would come to this. It's very touching to know that the fans enjoyed my work as much as I loved doing it. I'm a very lucky man to be remembered this fondly. ■

John Coates is a 32 year old Marketing Manager for the MCI Corporation in Atlanta, Georgia. He attended the University of South Carolina, graduating in 1987 with a B.A. in Political Science. His first comic (DC's Teen Titans *#41) was purchased for him by his parents while on a family vacation in 1973. John has been an avid comic fan ever since. Through the years, his comic interests expanded to include Silver Age comics, Golden Age comics, original art, and especially the great artists that have contributed so much to the history of comics. John was previously published in the* Overstreet Comic Book Quarterly.

(*Continued from page 28*) with me, but that was winding down. He had such a wonderful ink style, I'm surprised they would have someone else ink it. Probably to keep the old style going. When you do a newspaper strip you have to maintain the look and integrity of the character. (chuckle)

I had a large studio which connected to my house, but other than making little changes to the artwork here and there, Tuska worked at home. The great benefit to him was that he didn't have to waste a day commuting to New York City! It was much to his advantage. And we paid him the same price — if not more — than he would get in the city. We paid on delivery. We did the scripting and lettering, and he got about $50 per page for pencils and inks. (In those days a family man would make $35 a week!) Back then a comic artist would make a damn good living. Actually, our books were outselling most of the others so it wasn't as if he was working with a schlock outfit

Again, when I put out a line of books for Harvey in the '60s, George didn't have to travel to Harvey, he just "dumped" off the work at my house.

He was happy and we were happy. It was a very friendly relationship, it wasn't like he was working for me or I for him. I was so happy to get these guys that there was never a boss-employee relationship ever with any of these people that I worked with there.

George was a big, powerful looking man, a very handsome man. He was a very private person, he didn't hang with the other guys. He was hard of hearing back then, so we got along well, since—as someone once pointed out—my voice would peel paint!

My dog would bite him almost every time he came over. We had a little Bedlington Terrier—a poodle-type dog that looks just like a lamb. I won't say he disliked Tuska in particular, because he used to bite the mailmen too. And they were really ticked off. They wouldn't deliver the mail for a long time.

Well, the dog would bite Tuska in the ankles, until it reached the point where George would drive his station-wagon into my long circular driveway, drive up to the studio, look around for the dog, then make a beeline for the studio, running like hell. If he would have called me, I could have taken the dog in. But maybe he liked the game.

George liked to paint. He would paint oil on canvas board. If he didn't like his paintings, he would burn them up! Every Spring, he would take them out in his backyard and burn the ones he thought were bad! The neighbors were probably scared to death of him! Because of his hearing problem he didn't always respond to them when they asked him why. It was like the "Rites of Spring"—George Tuska burning his paintings!

I like to think George has very good memories of us, I know I do of him.

CARMINE INFANTINO When I was just getting started in the business, I studied his attitude and professionalism. I realized that if I were going to be successful in this industry, he was who I would need to emulate. His artwork has the same integrity he has .. clear and honest.

JOHN ROMITA Even as a child reading comics in the 1940s, I knew and admired George's work. Looking at George's panels was like watching a silent movie, frame by frame… he's that good a storyteller! George's work defines the visual medium in the proper light. During the 1950s while at Atlas, whenever I was in the office and saw George's work I would grab up as much as possible. For years I wanted him on Spider-Man but he was too busy. George is a good a figure and character man as ever in the business… and stacks with the best. ■

SIXTEEN FAVORITES

UNSUNG HEROES: A TOUR THROUGH THE "UNHERALDED" ITEMS IN MY COLLECTION

BY PAT KOCHANEK

On a recent visit to San Diego, I had a long conversation over dinner with the editor of *CBM*. It seemed to us that a very energizing and informative series of articles could be generated by the actual matter that is the driving force behind collectors and *CBM*, namely the collections themselves. We came up with a concept of showing and briefly discussing some of the under appreciated, unknown, unheralded, or otherwise surprising items in our own collections. This could include the covers or interiors of specific books, or other items that might be enlightening to the readers of *CBM*.

The only "ground rule" for participating in this project as a prospective author is the items discussed must actually be in your personal collection. A short and predominantly pictorial format would be used and should allow a wide variety of *CBM* readers to contribute, even the busy ones. This should provide a glimpse of some killer material that might not otherwise have been seen. Collectors interested in participating in *CBM*'s "Comic Room" should call Gary M. Carter at (619) 437-1996. Both Gary and I look forward to contributions from other serious collectors around the world.

For starters, I present to you sixteen "unsung heroes" from my own collection. Apologies to any non-DC fans, as you will see from these examples, I particularly like the early (1939-1942) and late (1947/48-1953) DC Golden Age, but, have much less interest in the books in between.

More Fun Comics #56, 61, and 65

More Fun Comics #56 is a mystical book, that is truly a very special early DC. Not only does it feature the first Dr. Fate cover, but it contains the continuation of the first Dr. Fate Story—not listed as such in the *Price Guide*. It is "ungettable" in true high grade. *More Fun Comics* #61 has a cover that can only be appreciated in the flesh. The bright blue and yellow Fate is literally alive emerging from the phosphorescent orange-red background. *More Fun* #65 has a fantastic "Spectre in the mirror" cover that is also special. These are all classic examples of vintage early DC gold, from the very "serious" early period. From my perspective, these three books stack up against any Superman or Batman family books and are very under appreciated. Please keep spending your money on Superman and Batman.

ALL THREE *MORE FUNS* ARE FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH/ MILE HIGH COLLECTION.

Flash Comics #8

This has a classic Shelly Moldoff Flash cover—the fourth non-cameo Flash appearance on a DC cover (see *Flash* #1, 6, and *All Star* #1 for the first three). It is simple, but powerful, and has always been one of my favorites. This is the way Flash should look, rather than like the cartoon character he resembled in later issues! Would you pay more for issues of *Flash* between #'s3 and 6 than this book? In my opinion, the Moldoff covers blow the others away.

THIS COPY OF FLASH #8 IS FROM THE LAMONT LARSON COLLECTION.

Adventure Comics #70.

This is a spectacular Burnley cover that is rarely noticed or mentioned. Starman appears to fly onto the cover, and the yellow car is blinding. It is a real surprise that just sticks out from the rest of the run.

THIS COPY OF *ADVENTURE* #70 IS FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH MILE HIGH COLLECTION.

Adventure Comics #79

No comment needed. Enjoy. This was the first

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Mile High that I picked out of the *Adventure* run (when it contained about 30 books). It didn't take long to decide.

THIS COPY OF *ADVENTURE* #79 IS FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH/MILE HIGH COLLECTION.

Star Spangled Comics #13

Totally unappreciated Simon and Kirby cover with the Guardian leaping out of a newspaper. Very tough in grade (the white covers are impossible) and a true standout in the run, even when surrounded by other Mile High collection books.

THIS COPY OF *STAR SPANGLED COMICS* #13 IS FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH/MILE HIGH COLLECTION.

Boy Commandos #9

Fantastic Simon and Kirby rising sun cover. Surrealistic "blue" soldiers in the foreground. No Kirby interiors, but who cares. I think this is the most under appreciated Kirby cover. It lists for practically nothing in the *Guide*. I have been offered over 10x *Guide* for this book, but, this copy has found its home. Only one copy of this book was delivered to the Colorado newsstand where the Church collection was purchased—suggesting that this may have had limited distribution. Very tough in grade. You might be able to find a mid or low-grade copy because nobody seems to know about it.

THIS COPY OF *BOY COMMANDOS* #9 IS FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH MILE/HIGH COLLECTION.

Green Lantern #16

I am not a huge fan of Golden Age Green Lantern (until about issue #28), but, there are a few exceptions. The black cover on this copy is really stunning. In addition, this is one of the first Golden Age covers I saw, back in the mid-1960s. I had an old beat-up copy of an issue of *Sensation Comics* and this book was featured in a house ad. I was immediately hooked. This book was hand-picked (along with the *GL* #28, 34, and 37) from the nearly intact Mile High run. Boy do I miss the good old days when 5x *Guide* seemed like a lot, and most of the Church books were still in at least partially intact runs.

THIS COPY OF *GREEN LANTERN* #16 IS FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH/MILE HIGH COLLECTION.

Flash Comics #88 and #96

I am a big Joe Kubert fan, and these are my favorite Kubert Flash and Hawkman covers, respectively. There are only three Kubert Flash covers (*Flash Comics* #86, 88, and 89). The *Flash* #96 cover is rivaled only by the #104—but everybody knows about #104. The interiors of the late *Flashes*, *GIs*, *All Americans*, *Comic Cavalcades* and *All Stars* are packed with Kubert, Infantino, Toth, and Hasen art. The use of specific villains in these issues is another window to the Silver Age.

THESE COPIES OF *FLASH COMICS* #88 AND #96 ARE FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH/MILE HIGH COLLECTION.

All Flash #32

The most under appreciated DC Golden Age book! This book is the last issue, and is scarce in grade. It has the origin of the Fiddler, and contains the origin of the Star Sapphire. This story was the first non-Superman or Batman-family Golden Age story ever reprinted in the Silver Age—see *Flash Annual* #1 (1963).

THIS COPY OF *ALL FLASH* #32 IS FROM THE EDGAR CHURCH/MILE HIGH COLLECTION.

All Star Comics #41

Another of the most under appreciated of the DC gold. This book features one of only two Toth *All Star* covers, and contains the second appearance of the "Injustice Society". This book had great interiors that are very reminiscent of *JLA* #21 and 22. Try to find a copy in VF or better. These late books are rarely found in NM or better condition. Even the Mile High collection is somewhat spotty in this era.

THIS COPY OF *ALL STAR COMICS* #41 IS FROM THE NELSON DODDS FIND (OHIO COLLECTION).

All Star Comics #54

This issue features one of my favorite *All Star* covers, and typifies the very late DC Golden Age, near the death of the heroes. The DCs in this period are the prototypes of the early Silver Age. With a change of characters, this cover could easily double for a *JLA* Brave and the Bold appearance, or a sequel to *JLA* #22. Atom's new look and the addition of Black Canary were major bonuses for the late All Stars.

THIS SCARCE NM COPY OF *ALL STAR COMICS* #54 WAS PURCHASED FROM THE COLLECTION OF BOB NASTASI.

Batman #68 and Detective Comics #184

I always wanted these two spectacular covers from the late Gold and/or early Silver (take your pick) DC period, ever since seeing them on the back cover of *Batman Annual* #3 as a kid. They do not disappoint. Although *Batman* #68 can be had (with some luck) in true VF, the *Tec* #184 is extremely difficult to find in grade, and impossible to find with white pages. This VF- copy is the nicest one I have ever seen, and is the only book in my entire collection with tanning pages. (Let me know if you have a better one for sale!)

NEITHER *BATMAN* #68 AND *DETECTIVE COMICS* #184 IS A PEDIGREE COPY.

Well, that wraps up a visit to my comic room... thanks for taking time to look at some of my favorite books. I look forward to contributions of this type from other hobbyists and hope this first effort gets the ball rolling! Thanks for reading and happy collecting! ■

Dr. Pat Kochanek is a noted Pediatric Intensivist and Director of the Safer Center for Resuscitation located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His collecting passions include Silver Age art and Mile High comics. Pat has also served on the AACC Sotheby's Grading Committee, and was the author of the first definitive series on Mile High Comics published in CBM #2 –#5.

CBM COLOR GALLERY

More Fun #56 (Jun 1940, right) Dr. Fate fights a duel of magic powers on his first cover appearance. More Fun #61 (Nov 1940, below) The Mile High copy shows off the bright colors of this vivid Dr. Fate cover.

ALL COVERS & CHARACTERS © THEIR OWNERS

More Fun #65 (Mar 1941, above) "Mirror, mirror, on the wall…some crooks are headed for a fall…" on this Spectre cover by Bernard Baily. Flash #8 (Aug 1940, left) Shelly Moldoff's Flash races to the rescue, shown here on the cover of the Lamont Larson copy.

Adventure #79 (Oct 1942, right) This famous Manhunter cover shows why Simon and Kirby were the action kings of the Golden Age. Star Spangled #13 (Oct 1942) This "front page" cover is another terrific example of Simon and Kirby's talents for packaging action.

Boy Commandos #9 (Win 1944) Captain Rip and the Boys have the "Rising Sun" waving the white flag on this classic Simon & Kirby cover. Adventure #70 (Jan 1942, left) With Gravity Rod blazing, Starman swoops down on a murder-in-progress, on this effective Jack Burnley cover.

Green Lantern #16 (Sum 1945) This cover tantalizes the reader with its black jungle cover and its "...Amazing Jewel of Hope". The scarce last issue of All-Flash (#32, Dec 1946/ Jan 1947) This last issue of the title introduced a major DC villain, the Fiddler.

Flash #96 (Jun 1948, above) This Kubert cover is full of mystery and peril as mythical creatures put Hawkman in an underwater death-trap. Flash #88 (Oct 1947, right) Joe Kubert's Flash was long and lean–this is the second of the three Kubert Flash covers.

The cover of Detective #184 (Jun 1952) depicts Batman and Robin tackling one of their most colorful foes, the Human Firefly. All Star #41 (Jun/Jul 1948, below) features the great Alex Toth's rendition of the Injustice Society vs. JSA.

All Star #54 (Aug/Sep 1950, above) features one of the JSA's last performances... the "Circus of a Thousand Thrills". The cover of Batman #68 (Dec 1951/Jan 1952) showcases the confrontation between the Dynamic Duo and "the most bizarre villain of all time", in "The New Crimes of Two-Face".

ALL COVERS & CHARACTERS © 1995 DC AGR

YELLOW CLAW #1 (OCT 1956)
Joe Maneely's cover captures the evil intensity of "the most dangerous man of all time". This book was on the stands at the same time as Showcase #4.

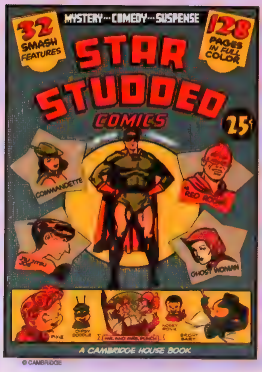
YELLOW CLAW © 1995 MEG ARR

YELLOW CLAW #2 (DEC 1956)
& Yellow Claw #3 (Feb 1957)
The four-issue run of Yellow Claw is one of the highlights of post-Code pre-"implosion" Atlas, and the title character is certainly the first Silver Age super-villain.

YELLOW CLAW #4 (APR 1957)
At the dawn of the Silver Age the "Free World" faced the menace of the Yellow Claw. Although the "Master of Mystery's" title lasted only four issues, the Yellow Claw returned in the late-1960s to do battle with Nick Fury, Agent of Shield.

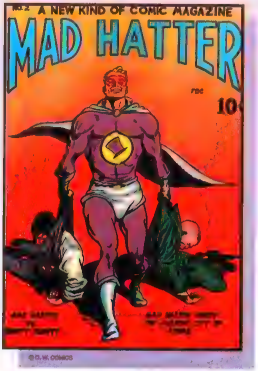
THE TOP SPOT ONE-SHOT (1945) is another collection of knock-offs and second-bananas from the Bernard Bailey Studios..

THE L. B. COLE COVER on *Great Comics* (1945) was wrapped over several different interiors... all of which were obscure and less than spectacular.



AMONG THE VARIED CONTENTS of *Star-Studded Comics* (1945, 128 pages) are two "costumed heroine" strips... Ghost Woman and the Commandette.

THE GERBER PHOTO JOURNAL does not show the cover of *Mad Hatter* #2 (Sep/Oct 1946)... a possible indicator of its rarity.



THE EMPEROR OF HATE straddles the globe on the cover of *Real Life Comics* #3 (Jan 1942) as insets depict the sinking of passenger liners, concentration camps, the machine gunning of innocent city dwellers, tragic refugees, the Nazi blitzkrieg, and a globe community in flames. Besides its historic cover, this scarce WWII collectible also contains a biography of Adolf Hitler.

© HECHO BIEN

AIMING STRAIGHT FOR THE JUGULAR, the art on the cover of *Great Comics* #3 (Jan 1942) depicts superhero Futuro taking Hitler straight to Hell! This WWII propaganda cover isn't just name calling… its "butt-kicking" humiliation reserved only for the greatest enemy of a country! Many Americans of the day hoped that this pictorial prediction of Hitler's fate would ultimately come true. The bizarre cover art, the WWII theme, the appearance of Hitler, and the fact that it is extremely rare make *Great Comics* #3 the focus of extremely high collector demand.

© GREAT COMICS

The Many Faces of Lex Luthor

by Bob Hughes

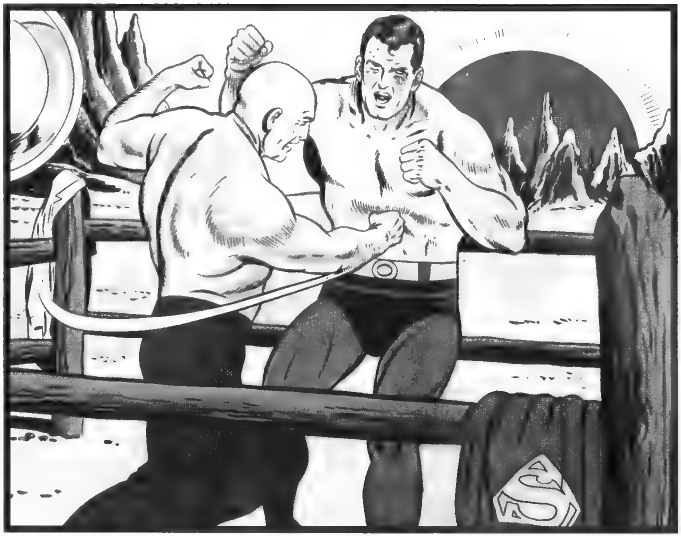
LEX LUTHOR IS CERTAINLY THE OLDEST CONTINUALLY APPEARING VILLAIN IN comics, beating out the Joker by two months. Unlike his nearest competitor, however, whose appearance and personality have remained remarkably consistent over the past 50 plus years, Luthor has been subject to the whim and mercy of writers and artists who have not hesitated to remake him at the drop of a plot hole. While the Joker has remained a homicidal maniac and petty crook, Luthor has swung from world dominator to petty swindler to tragic hero/villain and on to corrupt businessman. The primary focus of this article is on Luthor's tragic hero/villain phase, a period that encompassed most of the Silver Age of comics and which pre-dated similar attempts to create tragic hero-villains such as Dr. Doom and Magneto.

Siegel and Shuster Luthor

Luthor's first appearance in *Action* #23 (April 1940) found him operating as a behind-the-scenes force fomenting war in Europe. He hypnotizes General Lupo of Galonia into bombing a neutral country in order to plunge the entire continent into war. With civilization then destroyed, Luthor reasons, only he will be able to pick up the pieces. Luthor proclaims "With scientific miracles at my command I'm preparing to make myself supreme master of the world!". In this first of four appearances drawn by Superman creator Joe Shuster, Luthor was depicted as a scrawny red-headed runt with a scraggly bowl shaped hair cut.

Although sent hurtling to his death at the end of that story, Luthor lost no time in making a comeback. In fact, if the on-sale dates in then-current house ads are to be believed, Luthor's second appearance in *Superman* #4 actually went on sale the week before the *Action* issue. Even back then DC couldn't keep its continuity straight!

In this oft-reprinted story Luthor challenges Superman to



Luthor and Superman duke it out on a red-sunned planet where Supe's powers are nullified, in *Superman* #164 (Oct 1963).

All characters and covers © 1995 DC ARR

a duel, brains vs brawn, and attempts to duplicate the Man of Steel's super feats with his scientific inventions. The whole thing turns out to be a plot to divert Superman from Luthor's real objective–stealing another scientist's earthquake machine. Luthor appeared twice in *Superman* #4. Despite his great pride and self avowed genius, he spent both stories stealing other scientists' inventions. The sole personality trait shared by all versions of Luthor to the present day? He cheats!

After one last appearance in *Superman* #5, Siegel and Shuster put Luthor to rest. It was a year before Luthor returned in *Superman* #10, a year in which many changes were made. Joe Shuster was no longer drawing or even supervising every Superman story. The need to pump out a daily comic strip, together with the monthly *Action* story, the boost of the quarterly *Superman* title to bi-monthly, and the addition of the quarterly *World's Finest* strip would have made it impossible for even the fastest artist to go it alone. There had also been a change in the editorial staff, as Vincent Sullivan, the editor who had "discovered" Superman, had gone off to found his own comics company. Whitney Ellsworth had come on board to replace him. It is probable that Mort Weisinger had also been hired by this time.

The New GA Luthor

All these changes help explain the fact that the Luthor who appeared in the "Invisible Menace" story in *Superman* #10 bore no resemblance to the earlier character. The red-headed scrawny runt had been replaced by a burly bald-headed man who reeked of pure evil. The story told is that ghost artist Leo Novak was given reference material from an earlier story to draw Luthor from and mistakenly copied one of his assistants. The new Luthor may have been a mistake, but it was one that could easily have been corrected if the new editorial staff had noticed it in time. Perhaps the staff simply liked the new version better, considering him more visually striking. Artist John Sikela, who did two of the most famous stories of the Golden Age, "The Powerstone" and "When Titans Clash" (*Action* #47 and

Superman #17) even went so far as to give Luthor fangs.

When Siegel and Sikela both went into the military in 1942, Luthor disappeared again, this time for almost two years before resurfacing in *Superman* #31's "Tune Up For Crime". Now drawn by Sam Citron, Luthor became emaciated and skull-faced, with sunken eyes. He looked in need of immediate hospitalization. In 1946, when Sikela returned, Luthor regained his former menacing appearance.

ACTION COMICS
12¢
"The SUPER-POWERS of LEX LUTHOR!"
PROBLEM OF METROPOLIS: WHERE IS YOUR HERO, SUPERMAN? NOW THAT HE'S MORE POWERFUL AND BETTER THAN HE'S EVER BEEN, IS HE AFRAID THAT HE'LL LOSE HIS STATUS?
ERECTED BY METROPOLIS CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Super-Luthor smashes his fist through Superman's statue... rendered by Curt Swan and George Klein for *Action* #298 (Mar 1963).

Luthor's first cover appearance, drawn by John Sikela for *Action* #47 (Apr 1942).

Continuously portrayed as a madman, Luthor thought nothing of killing his own gang if they became an impediment. In *Superman* #43's "The Molten World" he cold-bloodily "murdered" Clark Kent for writing unflattering stories about him. His main motivation remained world conquest, even to the point of selling Earth out to alien invaders for his own personal gain (*Superman* #34 "When the World Got Tired").

Atom Man vs Superman

By 1951's "The Man Who Stole the Oceans" (*Superman* #71) however, the tide had turned. Luthor's plot to dry up all the world's oceans in return for millions of dollars in ransom was his last serious attempt at world conquest and mass destruction. As Superman's other recurring villains began appearing less and less often, Luthor was forced into plots that would have been more appropriate for a shady conman like the Prankster. In *Superman* #79's "Citadel of Doom" he was reduced to the role of a common swindler, trying to con businessmen into believing the world was about to end so that they would sign their property over to him.

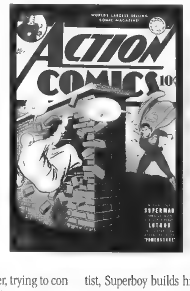
Perhaps only Luthor's starring role in the 1949 movie serial *Atom Man vs Superman* saved him. Memorably played by Lyle Talbot, the suave confident Luthor makes this serial stand up to repeated viewing, while the first Superman serial is almost impossible to sit through once.

After Sikela switched to drawing Superboy stories in 1948, the majority of Luthor's appearances were drawn by Wayne Boring. Boring took Luthor out of his mad scientist robes and put him in business suits (usually orange or purple, but occasionally green–never red or blue–those colors were reserved for Superman). Luthor also put on substantial poundage–too much prison food perhaps. His face became haggard and jowly. He took to hanging around with has-beens like the Toyman and the Prankster. No longer a contender, he contented himself with trying to steal other people's inventions or finding a chunk of Kryptonite somewhere.

The "Weisinger Age"

Thus things stayed until 1960 when editor Mort Weisinger and returning Superman creator Jerry Siegel were looking for new ideas to spice up the sales of *Superboy* and *Adventure Comics*. Weisinger had found success with stories that prefigured events in Superman's adult life, such as Superboy meets Lois Lane (*Superboy* #63 and *Adventure* #261), Robin (*Adventure* #253) and Green Arrow (*Adventure* #258). The most important of these was "The Ghost of Jor-El" in *Superboy* #78 (January 1960) in which Siegel had introduced a teen-aged Mister Mxyzptlk. In a reversal of what had happened to Luthor, the formerly bald-headed gnome was given a full head of wavy red hair.

Given the success of such retroactive continuity it was logical that Luthor also enter Superboy's life as a teenager. So "How Luthor Met Superboy" appeared in April 1960 in *Adventure* #271. Conveniently forgetting that Superboy had already twice met an adult Luthor (*Superboy* #57, September 1957 and *Adventure* #253, October 1958) Siegel and Al Plastino re-introduced him as a young farm boy with curly brown hair (and a first name, Lex!).



His first introduction to Superboy is saving him from one of those ubiquitous falling Kryptonite meteors that existed in those days. Upon discovering that young Luthor aspires to be a scientist, Superboy builds him an ultra-modern laboratory as a reward, stocking it with the rarest chemicals on Earth and some found only in space. Ecstatically Luthor begins working feverishly on many experiments at once, soon creating not only protoplasmic life in a test tube, but a permanent antidote for Kryptonite! In his youthful exuberance, however, Luthor knocks over a beaker and starts a fire in the lab. A

passing Superboy sees Luthor's distress and blows the fire out with his super breath. Rushing inside and expecting to be showered with gratitude, Superboy is quite taken aback by the angry Luthor that confronts him.

"You rat!" cries Luthor "Your puff of super breath blew an acid bottle against the antidote bottle! They broke and their contents destroyed my greatest discovery! Not only that... the gas fumes made my hair fall out! I'm bald! You were jealous of my genius! So you deliberately broke those bottles and destroyed my formula- you knew I could never duplicate this formula again!"

Luthor's anger against Superboy is further stoked by the continued failure of his inventions, most of which cause destruction to rain down on Smallville. Superboy's constant rescues finally cause Luthor to snap. Digging up the Kryptonite meteor he had buried, he tries to kill Superboy, taunting him with the last drops of the Kryptonite antidote, held just out of his reach. Escaping from Luthor's death trap Superboy refuses to jail him: "For your own sake, I hope you straighten out your thinking and use your brilliant mind for humanity!" counsels Superboy.

Grudge Fight!

In this story Siegel carefully reconstructed the original rivalry he had started back in the brains vs brawn battle in *Superman* #4. No longer a petty criminal who considered Superman merely an obstacle to the accumulation of wealth, Luthor was now engaged in a no-holds-barred grudge fight against the muscle-bound oaf who had purposely destroyed his main chance at world-wide acclamation of his genius. From Luthor's warped perspective, it was Superman who was jealous of him! Luthor couldn't care less about his hair falling out. His grudge against Superboy is based on the destruction of his laboratory and lab notes. The hair bit existed solely to explain why Luthor (who was now supposed to be the same age as Superman) was bald. It was an attempt at misdirection to keep readers from realizing that Superman had been flying the skies of Metropolis for twenty-two years and that he was pushing fifty.

Eight months later Siegel delivered the follow-up in *Superboy* #85 "The Impossible Mission". In this tangled and twisted time-travel conundrum Superboy meets the adult Luthor back during the Civil War. Luthor whacks Superboy with a red Kryptonite meteor, paralyzing him so that he can neither move nor speak. So consumed with hate for the Man of Steel is he that he never questions Superboy's presence in this distant era, not until he hears a commotion on the street and realizes that Abraham Lincoln has just been shot. The arch-villain is consumed by grief, realizing that he has thwarted Superboy's attempt to change history. Devastated, he flees back to the present in tears, "his wicked features twisted with regret".

Lena Thorul

Siegel completed his restructuring of Luthor two months later with a *Lois Lane* story (#23) "The Curse of Lena Thorul". Siegel introduced Lex's younger sister Lena (who was nowhere in sight in the Superboy tale). Shamed by Luthor's turn to evil, his parents had changed their name and told Lena her brother was dead. Now Luthor devotes his time to protecting her secretly and keeping her from finding out her true heritage. He claims its "the only good thing I've ever done in my life".

Almost two years later, in December 1962, new writers made Lena several years younger, a contemporary of Supergirl and gave her ESP powers from a childhood accident in Lex's lab (*Action* #295 "The Girl with the X-Ray Mind"). The basic structure of Lex secretly trying to protect her continued, resulting in several uneasy alliances with Supergirl. Luthor's reluctant team-ups with Superman's cousin provided a nice contrast to his many almost irrational battles with the Man of Steel himself.

The changes Siegel had made to Luthor in Superboy were

The ADVENTURES of SUPERBOY WHEN HE WAS A BOY
SUPERBOY
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT SUPERMAN'S ARCH-FOE IS LUTHOR, BUT WHAT BROUGHT ON THE ENMITY BETWEEN THE TWO? DID YOU KNOW THERE ONCE WAS A TIME WHEN LUTHOR AND SUPERBOY WERE GOOD FRIENDS—THAT LUTHOR EVEN SAVED SUPERBOY'S LIFE? WHAT THEN WAS THE ORIGINAL REASON FOR LUTHOR'S INSANE HATRED OF THE MAN OF STEEL? YOU'LL FIND OUT WHEN YOU READ...
How LUTHOR Met SUPERBOY!
GEE, SUPERBOY, IT'S SWELL OF YOU TO BUILD THIS MODERN LABORATORY AT SUPER-SPEED FOR ME OUT OF ALL THAT SCRAP METAL!
ANYTHING FOR A FRIEND, LUTHOR!

Jerry Siegel and Al Plastino gave Luthor a first name and an obsession of revenge upon Superboy in *Adventure* #271 (Apr 1960).

carried over into the Superman feature. Now that Luthor was supposed to be the same age as Superman, artist Curt Swan trimmed off all of Wayne Boring's excess poundage. Luthor abandoned his rack of red-purple suits and dressed in prison greys to remind himself of his humiliating defeats at the hands of Superman.

"The Conquest of Superman" in *Action* #277 (June 1961) is a perfect example of the new Luthor. Luthor successfully robs Fort Knox and appears to kill Superman in the process. When he later finds out it was only a Superman robot, he is so depressed he returns all the gold.

Edmond Hamilton's Luthor

The next step in Luthor's development occurred in 1963 in *Superman* #164's "Showdown Between Luthor and Superman". Luthor issues Superman a public challenge to battle him man-to-man without using his super-powers. Superman is forced to accept or lose credibility, so he carts Luthor to a supposedly uninhabited red sun planet where they will be on equal terms. In one of the all-time classic covers, Luthor is seen boxing a bruised Superman under a blazing red sun. Luthor holds his own for the first couple of rounds, but the Man of Steel's superior knowledge of hand-to-hand combat eventually turns the tide.

SUPERMAN
12¢
APR. 1 APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NO. 168
Special ALL-LUTHOR ISSUE! featuring "LUTHOR-SUPER-HERO!" and "LEX LUTHOR, DAILY PLANET EDITOR!"
I SEE YOU, SUPERMAN! SURRENDER! YOU CAN'T ESCAPE—THE DEFENDER!
HOORAY FOR THE DEFENDER! HE'LL CATCH THAT SUPERMAN FROM EARTH WHO STOLE OUR TREASURE!
WHAT IRONY. ON THIS WORLD I HAVE NO SUPER-POWERS—AND I'M HUNTED AS A PUBLIC ENEMY! BUT LUTHOR, MY GREAT FOE, WAS SUPER-POWERS: A SECRET IDENTITY, AND SA PUBLIC HERO!
LEX LUTHOR AND HIS EARTH SLAVES
CHEERED BY THE PEOPLE OF LEXOR

The cover of *Superman* #168 (Apr 1964) shows Luthor as the superhero and Superman as the public enemy.

Significantly, as soon as he starts to lose Luthor begins cheating, using scientific gadgets that he had secretly brought with him. Later, Luthor finds a city on the planet that they had both thought was deserted. He offers to help the people rebuild their desert world in exchange for use of their abandoned technology to kill Superman. Thinking that Luthor is going to help them the crowds cheer him on. The adulation which Luthor had always sought and was never been able to find on Earth starts to turn his nature around "I never had a crowd cheer me before, and I rather like it!"

Unfortunately he finds he cannot live up to their expectations. He search for water fails. "I can't let these people down who think I'm a hero." In desperation he surrenders to Superman and voluntarily agrees to return to Earth and jail. On the way, he asks Superman to help the people by sending them water from another planet.

This tale, by science fiction writer Edmond Hamilton, shaped Luthor's destiny for the rest of the sixties. Luthor would continue to return to this planet to rest between his endless battles with Superman, eventually finding his true love, Ardora, and getting married. Despite finding the adulation and love he had always sought after, Luthor cannot give up his quest for revenge against the Man of Steel. Hamilton enjoyed toying with the role reversal inherent in a powerless and hunted Superman battling against a "heroic" Luthor, eventually giving Luthor his own costume and secret identity (*Superman* #168 "Lex Luthor, Super-Hero") as The Defender of the planet Lexor (gratefully renamed in his honor). Typically Luthor's costume is purple, continuing the tradition of avoiding Superman's colors.

Luthor's Finest Hour

By 1968, both Hamilton and Siegel had left DC, leaving the continuation of Luthor's career in others' hands. These later scribes had little understanding of the motivations and personality quirks that the two had developed. An exception was the five-part serial that ran through *Action Comics* #362 through #367, possibly Luthor's finest hour and certainly the closest he ever came to making Krypton-dust out of the Man of Steel. In a throwback to his forties m.o. Luthor operates behind the scenes. In fact, he and Superman never meet face to face throughout the entire adventure.

The first chapter, "The Head of Hate" introduced the stylish artwork of Ross Andru, brought on board to pep things up with a big "in your face" Marvel style. In it, a new villain, Ventor, an insane ventriloquist, manages to hypnotize Clark Kent into trying to kill Superman. Ventor turns out to be a stooge for Luthor, operating from his prison cell. There Luthor has synthesized Virus X, a Kryptonian virus previously introduced in *Superman* #156. He has it smuggled to

Ventor, who gives it to the hypnotized Clark to kill Superman with. Although he succeeds in breaking the hypnotic spell, Clark accidentally infects himself anyway.

Superman finds himself dying of an incurable disease. His friends try to help but to no avail. The Kandorians have no cure. The Phantom Zone villains refuse to allow Supergirl to project him into the Zone to save his life. The magnitude of Luthor's villainy becomes clear in the third chapter, "The Untouchable of Metropolis" in which Luthor blackmails Metropolis for $1 million to cure Superman, then laughs in his face. "I conned your friends out of a million bucks, and you're still a candidate for a coffin!"

Since Virus X for some weird reason is contagious to humans, his friends reluctantly agree to shoot his dying body into space where it will be consumed by a distant red sun. As Superman passes the star system where Lexor is located he uses his telescopic vision to see the people of Lexor turn against Luthor and tear down his statues. Having watched Luthor's heinous behavior on interplanetary television his former friends are revolted by his callous blackmail trick. Only Ardora stands by his side.

Miraculously cured (no, I'm not going to tell you how) Superman returns to Earth in *Action* #366, only to find he has been replaced. He soon learns the JLA have been masquerading as him while the residents of Kandor attempt to select a successor.

The reaction of Luthor to the failure of his greatest scheme ever is not recorded in this story, nor is his reaction to the Lexorians turning on him. In fact the Lexorians don't make another appearance for almost 15 years. Shortly after this story, long-time editor Mort Weisinger retired and turned over the Superman titles to an assortment of editors.

Major House-Cleaning

A major house-cleaning ensued with most of the long-running themes and gimmicks jettisoned. Luthor almost got the heave-ho along with them. He made 12 appearances from 1971-75, one less than he made in 1964 alone. In most of these stories the writers reduced him to an ineffectual buffoon, a minor annoyance that Superman quickly disposed of before turning to battle the latest space menace. In stories like *Superman* #282's "Lex Luthor, Super Scalp Hunter", the very forces which had shaped Luthor's intense hatred for Superman were made into objects of ridicule. His gray prison garb was replaced with a tacky purple and green super-villain suit and he appeared to be going the way of the Prankster and the Toyman into comic oblivion.

The Superman Movie

The forthcoming Superman movie may have changed that however. Realizing that Luthor was scheduled to be the main villain in the film, DC began promoting him more in the comics. He was given a place of honor in the historic *Superman vs the Amazing Spider-Man* tabloid produced in 1976. Under Marvel scripter Gerry Conway, Luthor reverted to his forties madman persona and attempted to destroy the entire planet because they treated his genius with contempt. When the movie finally came out though, Luthor was once again reduced to his role of buffoon.

The number of Luthor appearances in the next couple of years increased but he never posed a credible threat to the Man of Steel. In 1983 DC again tried to redesign Luthor and returned him to Lexor, conveniently forgetting that the Lexorians had turned against him. Luthor now has a son and a life of total happiness, but he throws it all away in one last mad attempt to kill Superman, an attempt which results in Luthor blowing up his own planet. His twisted mind manages to blame this latest tragedy in his life once again on Superman, but it doesn't make him any more formidable an opponent. Luthor's final quest for revenge fizzles out over the course of *Superman* #385-386.

SUPERMAN
THREE OF SUPERMAN'S MOST FORMIDABLE FOEMEN UNITED AGAINST HIM! THE SCIENTIFIC GENIUS OF LEXOR, THE INCREDIBLE, FRAIL MUSTACHE OF THE TOYMAN, AND THE MYSTERIOUS PRANKSTER -- HOW THE MIGHTY MAN OF STEEL MUST CONTEND AGAINST ALL THREE FOR SUPERMAN THIS MEANS TROUBLE TROUBLE AND YOU'LL HAVE FUN YOURSELF AS YOU READ THE AMAZING TALE OF --
"THE TERRIBLE TRIO!"
OUR PARDON IS COMPLETE! LT. WILL, BE LATHOR, THE TOYMAN, AND THE PRANKSTER -- COMBINED AGAINST SUPERMAN!
A FINAL WORD! FOR THE POOR, MUSCLEBOUND CRAFT WHAT CANNOT DOES HE HAVE AGAINST US?
ULP!

Luthor, the Toyman, and the Prankster teamed up against the Man of Steel in *Superman* #88 (Mar 1954), drawn by Wayne Boring.

Of course all of Superman's and Luthor's past history was swept away in the great revision that followed the "Crisis on Infinite Earths" mini-series. The new Luthor, constructed in large part by John Byrne, was touted as a throwback to the forties version (although the resemblance is closest to the Lyle Talbot version from the Superman vs Atom Man serial). Once again Luthor is a one-dimensional character consumed by hatred and power lust for no discernable reason. The tragedy, nobility, and unpredictability infused into him by Jerry Siegel and Ed Hamilton are gone, replaced by nothing more than a business suit. Thus is Silver turned into Bronze. ■

SUB GENRE: ANTI HITLER COMICS

Since 1941 artists have featured Adolf Hitler as the villain of countless comic book covers and stories. But, how can collectors decide which of these is the most collectible anti-Hitler comics?

BY ALAN BARTHOLOMEW

Since 1941 artists have featured Adolf Hitler as the villain of countless comic book covers and stories. Out of all these, how can you decide which are truly the best anti-Hitler comics? To answer this question, I think one needs to consider five factors.

First and foremost, a great anti-Hitler comic must do its part to reveal and vilify the true nature of Hitler. This was the man who started World War II, whose troops conquered most of Europe, and whose SS slaughtered millions of "undesirables" in the name of racial and moral superiority. The comic can satirize, abuse, and make fun of Hitler, as long as it keeps these facts in mind.

Second, the best anti-Hitler comics have to be published during World War II. This was when the United States mobilized as never before, or since, to fight for freedom. Only the comics written during the war are bursting with the energy and passion of those times.

Third, the best anti-Hitler comics must have an exceptional cover. Even non-Hitler comic collectors should be impressed with the composition, coloring, and technique of the cover art.

Fourth, the cover has to combine the image (or caricature) of Hitler with a unique and interesting concept or theme.

Finally, to be a great comic book, it must contain a great story featuring Hitler. A great cover by itself is not enough.

Many books meet one or more of these criteria, but only two of them set the standard in every one of these categories: *Great Comics* #3 (the best fictional use of Hitler) and *Real Life* #3 (the best non-fictional use of Hitler).

Great Comics #3

As Hitler comics go, *Great Comics* #3 aims straight for the jugular: the superhero Futuro takes Hitler to Hell! This isn't the name-calling, butt-kicking humiliation usually found on a Hitler cover, but a prediction of what many pray was his ultimate fate.

Great #3 was drawn and distributed (see text inset) during the heady days following the U.S. entry into World War II. Its express purpose was to vilify and dehumanize Hitler. This may seem unnecessary now, but even after Pearl Harbor, war between the U.S. and Germany was by no means inevitable. It was Hitler, honoring his pact with Japan, who decided the matter by declaring war on the United States. There was a real need, therefore, to help mobilize young Americans against the specter of Hitler and Nazism.

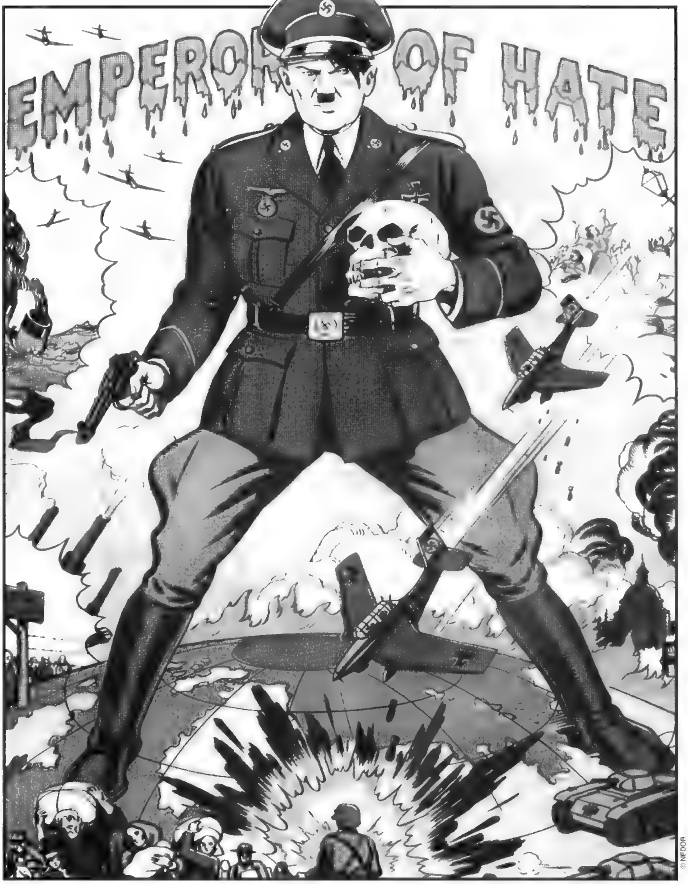
I have been unable to determine who the cover artist was (perhaps a *CBM* reader can help?), but they are certainly one of the best Lou Fine imitators. For example, the artist utilized exquisite cross-hatching to delineate a multitude of folds in Futuro's cloak. There is real authority and grace also in Futuro's left forearm and hand as it directs Hitler to the fiery pit. With Satan watching from above, three demons cheerfully escort a reluctant Fuhrer to the open flames.

Complementing the cover artwork is the striking use of primary colors. The red demons contrast vividly with Futuro's blue cloak and Hitler's green and yellow uniform. You can almost smell the sulfurous scent of the red and yellow flames as they illuminate the scene.

The solemn African sentry on the right side of the cover is actually a movie still of a zombie from "The Lost City". *Great* #3 contains Part One of this movie serial adaptation, which concludes in a different title, *Choice* #3 (January 1942). The back cover provides further advertising for "The Lost City" with a well-designed combination of movie stills and line art.

The same artist that drew the front cover also drew the title story in similarly stunning fashion. At a time when the majority of comic book stories were eight pages or less, this one is 15 pages long! The story starts with a splash page that shows Futuro watching a cloven-hoofed Satan brandish his pitchfork to prod Hitler into a boiling pot. The upper left corner of the splash shows a postcard that is originally addressed "Adolf Hitler, Berlin" but has been return-marked "Sorry- not here. Suggest try Satan, c/o Hades."

The star of the story, Futuro, is one of those eccentric concoctions from the early days of superheroes. Futuro lives through the centuries, can't be seen because "he is from the future" (go figure!), and can fly anywhere


EMPEROR OF HATE

© GREAT COMICS

HITLER IN HELL
is the bizarre cover theme of *Great Comics* #3 (Jan 1942). This extremely rare Golden Age classic is in high demand by cover collectors, WWII collectors, Hitler collectors, and esoteric comics collectors. Because of this the market value of *Great Comics* #3 has experienced an incredible escalation in price in the last few years.

without mechanical assistance because he is "master of time and space". Assisting him are his fellow U.S. Futurians, and Nimbus, the future hound ("I've got Hitler's scent and it sure smells rotten!").

Futuro and his gang decide to kidnap Hitler to prevent him from destroying civilization. Attacking Hitler's "Bavarian Castle", the invisible Futurians wreak havoc on his guards. Hitler is so frightened and confused by the commotion that he panics and shoots his own reflection in a mirror. As the Futurians enter his inner sanctum, Hitler, in an eerie premonition of 1945, contemplates suicide.

Deciding instead to live, Hitler is finally captured by Futuro, who kicks his rear into Hades. Satan, at first fearing Hitler as a rival, soon decides that he is helpless and allows his monsters to torture him. One giant bird tries to eat Hitler but spits him out because he tastes so bad. Fearful of his life, Hitler offers an alliance to Satan so that they can learn Futuro's secrets. Hitler has not changed his ways, however, and is just biding time until he can double-cross Satan (just like he double-crossed Stalin and the Soviet Union).

Incredibly, the writer then interjects a witch (who is a spurned suitor of Satan) as a love interest for Hitler! He also adds a kidnapping of Hitler, more torture of Hitler, the rescue of Hitler, and Futuro's triumph over Hitler's and Satan's scheme to learn how he gets his powers. And that's in just two pages!

The story comes to an inconclusive end as Futuro takes Hitler back to earth to face the justice of mankind. After all, this was still early in the war and the writer did not want to trivialize the real effort required to administer that justice.

Real Life #3

Real Life #3 was delivered to the newsstand in early December 1941. The Mile High copy has an arrival date of 12-9, which was only two days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and two days before Germany declared war on the United States. It's hard to imagine better timing for a comic like *Real Life* #3.

The immortal Alex Schomburg outdid himself on the cover. He again demonstrates how easily he can pack in the action, drama, and symbolism while keeping every element completely clear and balanced. It is clutter without confusion... and complexity without chaos. In addition to the main figure of Hitler, there are six portraits, three vignettes of atrocities, a city in flames, a trail of refugees, a banner ("Emperor of Hate"), and most of the German army!

This cover (like the title suggests) depicts real life. This Hitler is not a sloppy caricature but an accurate portrayal of a scowling Fuehrer. With just a few lines Schomburg captures Hitler's features in a simple powerful way.

The scenes surrounding *(Continued)*

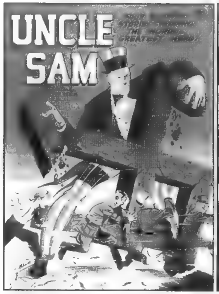
COLLECTOR **WEST STEPHAN** LOOKS AT HITLER...

COMICS' UNIVERSAL VILLAIN!

Of all the villains in the Golden Age, none received as much widespread exposure as Adolf Hitler, and rightfully so. Look at a comparison of Hitler's cover appearances to any other villains from 1940 to 1955: the Riddler appears on two covers, the Toyman on three covers, Mr. Mxyztplk on five covers, Lex Luthor on seven covers, Two-Face on seven covers, the Penguin on eight covers, the Prankster on eleven covers, and the Joker on thirty covers. Even the Joker didn't stand a chance against Hitler's seventy-two cover appearances, and all except one of them came out in a six-year span!

Many of the Hitler covers are considered classics to Golden Age collectors. Some good examples are: *Blue Bolt* Vol. 4 #1, *Captain America* #1, *Catman* #19 and #20, *Daredevil* #1, *Great Comics* #3, *Marvel Mystery Comics* #46 and #62, *Real Life Comics* #3, Spy *Smasher* #9, *Uncle Sam* #5, and many more. Over half of the Hitler covers show a threesome of Hitler, Tojo, and Mussolini; or Hitler, Hirohito, and Mussoiini. Rarely were the others seen without Hitler. An interesting fact is that Hitler appears on no less than ten first issues (more than any other number) and on six second issues. I guess our heroes and superheroes were ready to take on Hitler and his threat from the very beginning!

FIRST HITLER COVER The first comic book appearance of Hitler is *Mystic Comics* #7, cover dated December 1940 (hopefully this will be noted in the *Price Guide*). Even though Hitler fought the Destroyer first, his second appearance is his most famous. Captain *(Continued)*



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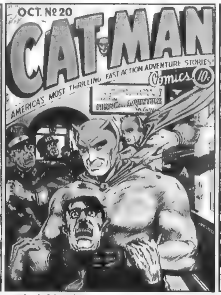

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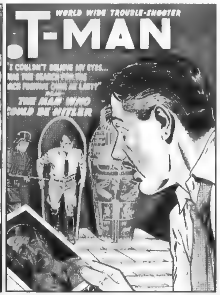

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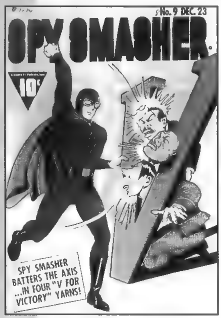
WEST STEPHAN'S CHECKLIST

HITLER COVERS

All Winners #6 (Fall 1942)
America's Greatest Comics #7 (Oct 1943)
Animal Antics #1 (Mar/Apr 1946)
Batman #18 (Aug/Sep 1943)
Big Shot Comics #28 (Oct 1942), #32 (Feb 1943), #46 (Jun 1944)
Blue Beetle #32 (Jul 1944)
Blue Bolt #V4/#1 (Jun 1943)
Blue Circle #3 (Sep 1944)
Bomber Comics #2 (Sum 1944), #4 (Win 1944)
Boy Comics #4 (Jun 1942), #7 (Dec 1942)
Boy Commandos #2 (Spr 1943)
Captain America #1 (Mar 1941), #2 (Apr 1941), #36 (Mar 1944)
Captain Marvel Adventures #21 (Feb 1943)
Captain Marvel Jr. #10 (Aug 1943), #13 (Nov 1943)
Catman Comics #16 (Dec 1942), #19 (Sep 1943), #20 (Oct 1943)
Comedy Comics #9(1) Apr 1942)
Daredevil Battles Hitler #1 (Jul 1941)
Fantastic Comics #21 (Aug 1941)
Four Favorites #1 (Sep 1941), #11 (Aug 1943)
Great Comics #3 (Jan 1942)
Green Hornet Comics #13 (Jul 1943)
Headline Comics #8 (Sum 1944)
Jackpot Comics #5 (Spr 1942)
Joe Palooka Comics #2 (Jan 1946)
Marvel Mystery Comics #46 (Aug 1943), #63 (Apr 1945)
Master Comics #13 (Apr 1941), #29 (Aug 1942)
Miss Fury Comics #3 (Win 1942), #4 (Sum 1942)
More Fun Comics #75 (Jan 1942)
Mystic Comics #7 (Dec 1940), #9 (May 1941)
National Comics #12 (Jun 1941), #38 (Jan 1944), #39 (Feb 1944)
Power Comics #2 (1944)
Prize Comics #37 (Nov 1943)
Real Life Comics #3 (Jan 1942)
Sensation Comics #13 (Jan 1943)
Sparky Watts #1 (Nov 1942)
Speed Comics #31 (Mar 1944)
Spy Smasher #9 (Dec 1942), #10 (Jan 1943)
Startling Comics #12 (Jan 1947)
Superman #17 (Jul/Aug 1942)
Super Rabbit #1 (Fall 1943)
Super Snipe Comics #8 (Apr 1943), #9 (Jun 1943)
Terry Toon's Comics #7 (Oct 1942)
Thrilling Comics #41 (Apr 1944), #44 (Oct 1944)
T-Man #6 (Jul 1952)
Uncle Sam #5 (Win 1942), #7 (Sum 1942)
USA Comics #5 (Sum 1942)
Weird Comics #20 (Jan 1942)
Wonder Comics (Nedor) #1 (May 1944)
Wonder World #32 (Dec 1941)
Worlds Finest Comics #9 (Spr 1943)
Young Allies #1 (Sum 1941), #9 (Fall 1943)

America #1, cover dated March 1941, has to be the "Action #1" of Hitler covers. It is here where it all begins, and within five years Der Fuhrer will appear on 69 more covers (This two year period does not include *T-Man* #6 (dated July 1952) which depicts Hitler coming out of a coffin!).

Not surprisingly, Timely used Hitler's image the most, featuring him on sixteen covers... some of which were "funny animal" comics clearly intended for early-age readers. Fawcett used Hitler nine time, DC seven times, Quality six times, and Nedor and Fox five times each. Counting the aforementioned Novelty, Holyoke, Gleason, etc. appearances- no character, fictional or non-fictional, has ever been used by so many comic book publishers.



***Spy Smasher* #9 (Dec 1942) shows the title character taking a swipe at the Axis commanders on an effectively-framed "V for Victory" cover.** © FAWCETT

RARREST HITLER COVER? The rarest Hitler cover may be *Power Comics* #2, which is not pictured in the Gerber Photo-Journal and has a scarcity level of 8, which means approximately only 11-20 copies are still estimated to exist. This

(Continued on page 57)

cover depicts an unnamed super-hero wearing a costume with American, British, and Russian designs on it. This hero is lifting up Hitler in one hand and Hirohito in the other, and smashing their heads together. (See Matt Nelson's "Unseen Gold" column in *CBM* #26, Page 41 for a look at this rare cover.)

Other notable entries include *Big Shot Comics* #25, which has the words "Heil Hitler" (as do about 10 to 20 others); *Blue Circle* #3, which shows Hitler as an octopus; *Bomber Comics* #4 and *Sensation Comics* #13, which show Hitler's face on a bowling pin (perhaps suggesting he's a pin-head!); *Captain America* #2, which has a globe with a German flag over the USA; *Headline Comics* #8, which has Hitler as an evil genie rising from a lamp; and *Thrilling Comics* #41, which shows Mussolini hiding under Hitler's bed!

Blue Bolt, Vol. 4 #1 (Jun 1943) Dick Cole- in a "sweet dream"- plants a black eye on "der Fuehrer" with a knockout punch. Al Plastino drew this in a cartoony style, but the sentiments were real enough. © PREMIUM GROUP

SENSATION COMICS #13
(Jan 1943) Wonder Woman sends one flying towards Adolf and friends, rendered by the inimitable H.G. Peter. © NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBL

(PAGE 55, LEFT TO RIGHT)
UNCLE SAM #5 (Wint 1942) showcases that ultimate super-patriot, with Al Gabrielle's art on the cover as U.S. and Buddy go to town on the "terrible trio". **CATMAN #20** (Oct 1943) The great Charles M. Quinlan drew this "most violent personal attack upon Hitler" cover, where the feline hero clasps the Nazi leader in a chokehold. **T-MAN #6** (Jul 1952) has Hitler coming back seven years after the War's end to match wits with the "World Wide Trouble-Shooter"- on an excellent "coffin cover" by Reed Crandall.

No matter what character, publisher, or artist you primarily collect... or where your Golden Age interests lie... there's a good chance that once you gaze one of these classic Hitler covers, it will become a permanent part of your collection. ■

THE MYSTERY OF

GREAT COMICS #3

Both the *Gerber Photo-Journal* and the *Overstreet Price Guide* list *Great* #3 as being a January 1942 publication, but nowhere in the comic's indicia is there any reference to January 1942. The only "date" clue in the indicia is that it is copyright 1942, which would indicate that it is probably a February 1942 issue. January publications are usually distributed in November or December- with unsold copies pulled from the newsstand on their publication date. Further evidence of a February date comes from the inside back cover of *Great* #3. It says that *Choice* #3 would be distributed one month following *Great Comics* #3 and that *Choice* #3 would be available March 10.

The title story in *Great* #3 seems to indicate that it was written after Pearl Harbor. At one point when the invisible Futurians are attacking Hitler, he worries about whether the "Japs" have double-crossed him. And later Satan is concerned that Hitler is storming the gates of Hell with "Japs". Although Germany, Italy, and Japan did have a mutual aggression pact, many of the terms were secret and were not revealed until after Pearl Harbor and Germany's subsequent declaration of war on the U.S.

. If you have additional information that can help us date *Great* #3, please write c/o *CBM* to help us date this issue.

For those who enjoy reprints, the cover and title story from *Great* #3 have been reprinted in *Anti-Hitler Comics* #1. The publisher, NEC, can be contacted at (617) 774-0170.

HITLER COMICS

continued from page 54

Hitler depict real life as well. The vignettes (clockwise, starting with the upper left) depict the sinking of a passenger ship (presumably by a U-boat), the machine-gunning of unarmed civilians, and, incredibly for a comic book, inmates in a concentration camp! Remember, this comic came out at the end of 1941. Although the Nazis created concentration camps in the Thirties, it was not until 1945 that publicity about genocide made "concentration camp" a term of wider infamy.

Also shown are the ruins of London. Fires blaze across the city, blocking the sky with clouds of smoke and ash. Among the burned-out buildings, only the last sentinel, St. Paul's Cathedral, still stands defiant.

To the left of the London scene. Stuka dive bombers clear the way for a formation of German panzer tanks. The real Stuka's dive would create a high-pitched scream that added confusion and fear to the destruction of their bombs. The Panzers and dive bombers, used in combination as shown here, were the primary instruments of the German army in their blitzkrieg march across Europe.

Finally, the cover (lower left) shows a never-ending trail of refugees. Women, children, and the crippled abandon their homeland, taking only what they can carry on their backs. Ever-vigilant German soldiers stand guard with their guns ready, bayonets fixed.

Even though it was drawn before the United States went to war, this was not a cover that softened its images to avoid controversy. Its depiction of Hitler's actual crimes created an image far more horrifying than the lurid fiction used on many other covers. To these realistic scenes, Schomburg added powerful symbolism. Blood drips from the scarlet lettering of "Emperor of Hate". Hitler's left hand cradles a skull. Schomburg makes certain we understand the nature of Hitler and his reign of terror.

In his right hand Hitler holds his murderous weapon, a smoking Luger. How much better it would have been if the Luger had been his only weapon. Hitler was no petty criminal with a gun, however, but a madman who held a mightier weapon: the German war machine. This war machine (infantry, armored artillery, air force, and navy- all shown on the cover) conquered most of Europe, Russia, and North Africa. And this war machine–under Hitler's command- committed the atrocities pictured here, murder on an unimaginable scale.

The use of sky-blue for the background color seems to be in direct opposition to the mood of the cover. But it was used on purpose. Amidst the scenes of unrelenting misery, that peaceful blue sky provides the only glimmer of hope. Yet between the reader and that hope stands Hitler and his invincible German army. There is no Allied army contesting Hitler; there is no super-hero knocking him for a loop. You, the reader, are being directly challenged by Hitler. If you want peace and hope then you must take up the challenge and do your part to defeat him.

As spectacular as the cover is, and I believe it is one of Schomburg's best, it in no way overshadows the interior. *Real Life* #3, like the rest of the *Real Life* series, tells the stories of famous historical figures. This issue provides a lengthy title feature: a 15-page biography of Hitler.

Titled "Emperor of Hate", the reasonably accurate biography starts with Hitler's birth, ends with his victory over France in 1940, and touches on most of the "lowlights" in-between. The splash panel, a montage of Hitler and a skull, and the rest of the interior art are well-drawn but a bit static. The artist went so far as to compose many of his panels from real photographs of the time.

The biography describes Hitler's artistic aspirations, his army service in World War I, his failed attempt to take over Bavaria after the war, and then his rise to dictator of Germany. It chronicles Hitler's voracious appetite for countries–consuming, in turn, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and France. This was a hunger so great that there was no room to describe the dozen other countries that he conquered.

The biography ends with the following quote: "But relentlessly the forces of justice move on-and Hitler's doom is sealed. The path may be long and hard, but at the end lies the death of Nazism...and the birth of a new era of international democracy and brotherhood."

The Allied countries eventually defeated Hitler and his Nazis in 1945, but the challenge of championing democracy and freedom remains with us today. ■

Alan Bartholomew is a computer software consultant from Mesa, Arizona, and has totally immersed himself in the comic collecting hobby. Alan greatest dream is to collect every comic book ever published.

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Yellow Claw

by Greg Pharis

Here's a question... if I were to ask you who you thought was the Silver Age's first villain, what would be your reply? Dr. Doom? Captain Cold? The Red Skull? Well, there was one villain before them all, and his name was...The Yellow Claw! Yellow Claw made his debut in *Yellow Claw* #1 (October 1956). *Showcase* #4 was dated September/October 1956, so I suppose one could make the argument that the Turtle could be the first Silver Age villain. But, I rule him out because his appearance was a one-shot, and he never appeared again!

The saga of the Yellow Claw begins during The Cold War. As it was raging, the Red Chinese heard of the existence of a mystic that could help them defeat the United States of America and her Allies. The Yellow Claw was to travel to America and, through sabotage, attempt to defeat and undermine US defense efforts. The Yellow Claw was aided by his grand-niece, Suwan as well as a cast of classic villains... Karl von Horstbaden (alias Fritz Voltzmann. the ex-commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp). This was a wonderful team-up of a "Communist" (whose agenda was to rule the world) with a Nazi (whose attempt to rule the world had just failed)- lots of "Good Evil" at work here!

On the other side of the law was Yellow Claw's nemesis, FBI agent Jimmy Woo, who constantly thwarted the Claw's nefarious plans. Suwan, who appeared to have some affection for Jimmy Woo, also assisted the agent- to the chagrin of her great uncle!

The series only lasted four issues, but it is an interesting run to collect and often hard to find. *Yellow Claw* features the work of several classic Atlas artists, including the great Joe Maneely, Bill (Sub-Mariner) Everett, John Severin, and, of course, the late Jack (King) Kirby. Jack's artwork didn't begin until issue #2 (December 1956), but his influence was immediate. Typical Kirby inventions included a shrinking device featured in the story "The Microscopic Army" (#3, February 1957); an alien from outer space named UFO, the Lightning Man (who must have been an ancestor of Modok and Arnim Zola); and The Screemies (#4, April 1957), mutated birds who were descendants of sea gulls that flew too close to the atomic tests at the Bikini Atoll. Kirby once again shows how timely concepts integrated into a pattern of imaginative detail can help make a new series "stand up on its feet and cast a shadow".

There are other elements that make Yellow Claw an interesting series. First is the character of Yellow Claw. He may seem familiar to Marvel fans because, with an injection of good-naturedness, he often reminds many of the Ancient One of Dr. Strange fame.

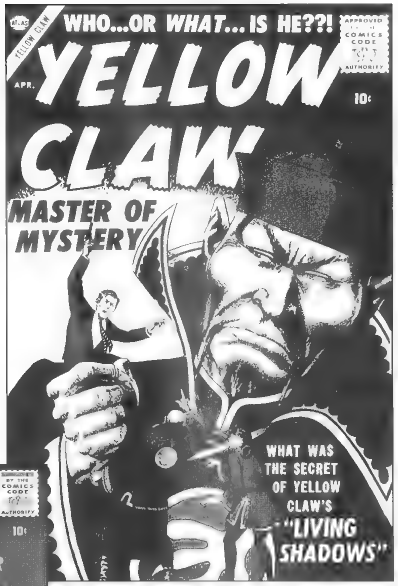
Second are the stories- three (count 'em three) Yellow Claw capers per issue! Each story is self-contained, yet the continuity was excellent I was impressed with one theme that wove itself through the entire series: the theme of

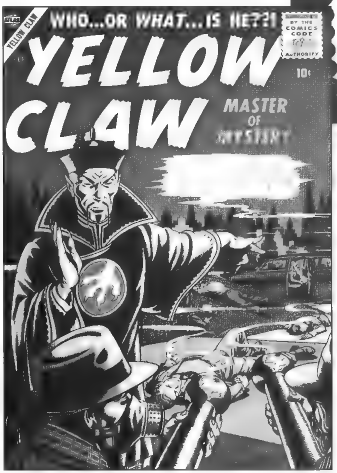
"blood is thicker than water". No matter how many times Suwan "betrayed" her uncle, he valued their blood relationship, and was never cruel to her.

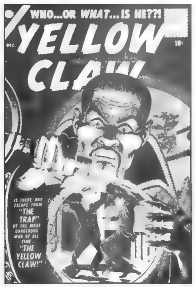
Atlas must have thought highly of the Yellow Claw. The Silver Age was just beginning, and yet they were confident enough to give him his own book. Villains didn't often get their own title, but usually appeared in tandem with the superheroes who did. Even the Joker didn't receive his own book until the '70s. It was a risky (and confident) move on the part of Stan Lee and Atlas.

Yellow Claw is still very affordable. Twenty-five years ago (In 1970) the entire run for Fine condition copies booked out at $12. The run today in Fine would be in the neighborhood of $480. The pricing is a bit topsy turvey though, because the real demand is for #2–4, the Kirby issues. Knowing this puts a whole different light on the last three *Yellow Claws*, making them a genuine bargain. In fact, they're listed at an amazingly inexpensive price.... for the first Silver Age villain! ■

The four-issue run of *Yellow Claw* is one of the highlights of post-Code pre-"implosion" Atlas, and the title character is certainly the first Silver Age super-villain.







YELLOW CLAW © 1995 MEG ARR

YELLOW CLAW Fine Price

	1970	'80	'90	'95
YC #1 (Oct 1956)	$3	$30	$86	$150
YC #2 (Dec 1956)	$3	$30	$70	$120
YC #3 (Feb 1957)	$3	$30	$60	$105
YC #4 (Apr 1957)	$3	$30	$60	$105

Yellow Claw remains affordable, especially when you consider that the three least expensive issues all contain scarce vintage Jack Kirby art!

DUCKBURG'S

By Michael Naiman

When your fortune is stored in a giant money bin in the middle of Duckburg (atop Killmotor Hill, no less) it's not exactly a discreet location! But, then again, Uncle Scrooge has never been one for being discreet! With constant exposure to this great temptation, it's no wonder that such ner-do-wells as the Beagle Boys, Magica de Spell, and other Duckburg villians are constantly trying to separate Uncle Scrooge from his hard earned fortune!

The cast of Uncle Scrooge's scalawags and scoundrels is many and varied... and each has their own brand of cunning, guile, and laughable traits too! Constantly scheming and plotting to get at the "Number One Dime"... looking to steal Scrooge's entire fortune, or just being humorously villainous are themes that support some wonderful storytelling throughout the Uncle Scrooge library of tales. Rather than showcase the "one-shot" villains often seen in some of the Four Color series, Scrooge's long adventures relied on bad guys and gals that kept coming back for more. Of these, four popular "regulars" head the roster of Duckburg's Most Wanted!

© 1999 Gladstone Publ. & Walt Disney

MAGICA DE SPELL First is villainess Magica de Spell... a powerful Italian sorceress living atop Mt. Vesuvius. Magica has traveled worldwide obtaining coins from the world's wealthiest and most successful men so that she may melt the coins together and fuse their mystical "earning" powers into a Super Amulet. Her singular goal in life is to be "...the richest duckess of all time!"

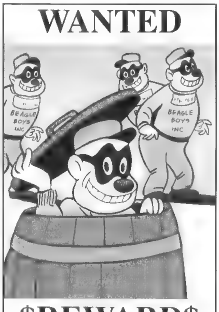
Unfortunately, the last (and most important) ingredient in this mixture is Uncle Scrooge's "Old Number One" dime! Her single-minded quest throughout her appearances in the Uncle Scrooge title is to liberate Scrooge from his favorite dime. Magica relies upon shape-changing, spells, and trickery... all done in an attempt to coerce Scrooge into giving up his treasured heirloom.

Barks has instilled several Donald-like traits in Magica... including a "short fuse" temper and nearly terminal impatience! For a unique twist on the Magica mythos, don't miss Don Rosa's new story in *Uncle Scrooge* #297 (February 1996) entitled "Of Ducks and Dimes and Destimes. (Author's note. many hard-core duck collectors will be calling this story

MOST WANTED

"The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck" #0).

BEAGLE BOYS While the number of Beagle Boys present in any given story may vary, their ineptness and greed always exceeds their numbers! Amazingly, while referred to during the story, they are only pictured in the final panel of *WDC&S* #134 (not yet wearing their "signature" prison uniforms), and it wasn't until they made their major appearance in *FC* #386 "Only a Poor Old Man" (March 1952), that they began to play a significant part in making Scrooge's life miserable. To help identify the Beagle Boys, Barks gave each convict a different number on their chest using combinations of the numbers "1", "6," and "7." At a glance, they are just a zany and funny group of bad guys, yet they also have a maniacal desire to obtain Scrooge's fortune.



DUCKBURG'S "FIRST FAMILY OF CRIME" is The Beagle Boys! They first appeared in *Walt Disney's Comic & Stories* #134 (Nov 1951)

"THE SECOND RICHEST DUCK" in the world is Flintheart Glomgold who first appeared in *Uncle Scrooge* #15 (Sep 1956)

In an unusual move for comic book publishers, Gold Key gave these Duckburg "bad guys" their own series... twice! Series one was entitled *The Beagle Boys* and ran 47 issues (November 1964 through February 1979). Not to miss a step after the demise of that run, their second title, *Beagle Boys Versus Uncle Scrooge*, began in March of 1979 and had a forgettable run of 12 issues lasting until February of 1980.

Writers for The Beagle Boys included Vic Lockman, Mark Evanier, and Roger Armstrong... with the artistic chores handled by Tony Strobl, Pete Alvarado, Dick Hall, Kay Wright, Bob Gregory, Roger Armstrong, Jack Manning and Cliff Voorhees (whew). *The Beagle Boys Versus Uncle Scrooge* was written by Vic Lockman with art by Pete Alvarado and Jack Manning.

FLINTHEART GLOMGOLD While not exactly a "villain", Flintheart is a worthy antagonist for Scrooge. The South African adversary is determined to prove that he is the World's Richest Duck. The character of Glomgold is a mirror image of Scrooge, yet Flintheart lacks the "heart and soul" which makes Scrooge actually lovable and... er... human?! "The Second Richest Duck" unravels in *US* #15 (September 1956) when Scrooge achieved the final victory with the assistance of his trusty Number One Dime (and the string tied around it!).

US #27 (September 1959) contains Flintheart Glomgold's come-back appearance and was published exactly three years (to the month) after his first bout with Duckburg's wealthiest resident! Flintheart and Scrooge squared-off for the second time in "The Money Champ". It once again pits fortune against fortune (and will against stubborn will) in a no-holds-barred contest to see who has the most money in the world! Barks last uses Flintheart in "So Far and No Safari" featured in *US* #61 (January 1966) and it was not

until 21 years later that Flintheart is resurrected in Don Rosa's 26-page epic "Son of the Sun" which appears in Gladstone's *US* #219 (July 1987).

Rosa's "Return to Plain Awful" in *Donald Duck Adventures* #12 (May 1989) is a sequel to the classic "Lost in the Andes" published in *FC* #233 (April 1949), and has Scrooge and Flintheart reuniting in a hilarious encounter to see who can gain exploitation/exportation rights to the square eggs which are indigenous to the lost Peruvian civilization. The final two appearances (so far) of Flintheart can be found in *US* #276 (March 1993) and in the Eisner award winning series "Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck" in *US* #290 (February 1995).

SOAPY SLICK The "Pig" character (aka Porkman de Lardo, aka Foulcrook, aka Mr. Scalpnick, aka Angus McSwine) is a recurring villain in the Duck stories. You can always count on him, no matter what name he chooses, to be "bad to the bone!"

Dedicated to causing physical harm to Scrooge, Donald, and the nephews, he establishes a truly evil persona with his intent to injure and maim. This is a much different (and more violent) tact than any of the other "bad-guys" that populate Duckburg. Barks' definitive Soapy Slick story can be found in "North of the Yukon" published in *US* #59 (September 1965). Also worthy of note is Rosa's "Last Sled to Dawson" in *Uncle Scrooge Adventures* #5 (June 1988). It provides an entertaining look back at the early Yukon gold rush adventures of Soapy and Scrooge.

Foulcrook also raises his ugly snout in *US* #44 (August 1963) in "Crown of the Mayas" and Mr. Scalpnick has a hair-raising adventure in *US* #52 (September 1964) in "The Great Wig Mystery." Both stories are great reading.

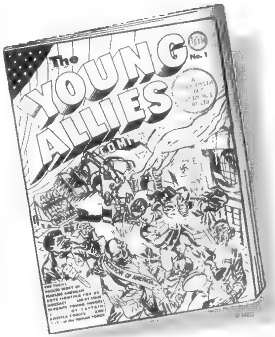
Batman/Joker, Spider-Man/Green Goblin, Uncle Scrooge/Beagle Boys… all great characters…all great counterparts. The recipe for a great story must include elements that, when combined, prove to be a creation tastier than the singular parts.

Scrooge, standing alone in the one-page joke stories is a different character than the Scrooge that we see in the longer adventure tales. Point-Counterpoint…Good Guy/ Bad Guy… Scrooge's gallery of witches and con-men, scalawags and scoundrels… all are integral parts of the Scrooge mythos. Besides the character of Scrooge himself, the most essential element of these classic and entertaining "Duck" adventures just may be Duckburg's Most Wanted! ■

Thanks to Alberto Becattini and David Gerstein for their help and assistance.

THE PIG CHARACTER (aka Soapy Slick, aka Porkman de Lardo, aka Foulcrook, aka Mr. Scalpnick, aka Angus McSwine) made his first appearance in the story "Forbidden Valley" which was originally published in *Donald Duck* #54 (Jul/Aug 1957). This story was a new version of *March of Comics* #20 (1948).

SORCERESS MAGICA DE SPELL first appeared in *Uncle Scrooge* #36 (Dec 1961) in her debut story "The Midas Touch".



by Sidney Friedfertig

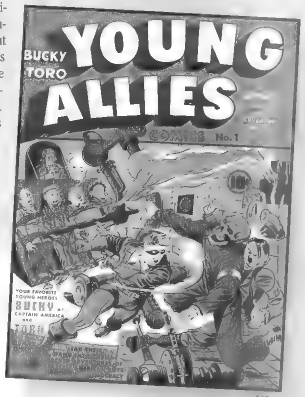
The next time that you peruse a copy of *Captain America* #7, pay particular attention to the inside front cover. In addition to the contents page, which was standard at the time, there is an advertisement for a new Timely title, The Young Allies. It's a small ad, but it is clear that the cover advertised is markedly different from the published cover of *Young Allies* #1 that actually appeared on the newsstands. It features Bucky and Toro, with Bucky single-handedly taking on Hitler, Tojo, Red Skull, Mussolini, and Stalin. If Bucky had more limbs Timely might have included the entire Nazi general staff. In addition, three of the remaining heroes were relegated to the back cover in much smaller scale than the bad guys. There is an American flag in the upper left corner and the book was called The Young Allies.

YOUNG ALLIES No. 1

THE ORIGINAL COVER!

But how did this strange publishing anomaly come about? According to Joe Simon, editor at Timely during that period (and co-creator, with Jack Kirby, of the cover that was used), the reason for the change can be summed up in three words "busy, busy, busy!" The advertised cover "is a complete jumble, it has no center focus. Everything works in the second cover, nothing works in the first. We put it out to meet a deadline and decided it wasn't worthy". It was Simon's decision to make the change and when looking at both covers side-by-side recently, he said "it's clear that we made the right decision".

One thing that makes a Golden Age cover immediately recognizable is that the artists attempted to use every available inch to showcase what was inside while still maintaining some semblance of cohesiveness. Take a look at a typical Schomburg cover… *U.S.A.* #7 for example. There isn't one square half inch without art! While crowding as much on the cover as possible, in order to immediately grab the readers attention was standard, there eventually comes a point of "diminishing returns". On the cover that was scrapped, the heroes are depicted less prominently than the villains (except for the two members of the team already known to the public). Additionally, there wasn't even room to include all the members, with Whitewash not appearing on the original cover. This is no way to launch a new team. On the actual cover, our eyes are immediately drawn to Bucky and Toro, and their teammates can be clearly seen.



Politics also played a role. The decision to leave Red Skull and Hitler as the villains was made because "the Nazis were always the bad guys", according to Stan Lee. While the Axis powers were clearly the enemies of the day, shifting tides of war dictated that Stalin should be dropped. Russia went from foe to ally quickly. "We decided it wouldn't be wise or prudent to keep Stalin on the cover", said Lee. In fact Tojo and Mussolini (along with Hitler) did grace the cover of a future issue of *Young Allies* #9, but Stalin never appeared on another issue of this title.

In today's comic book publishing world, it would almost take "an act of God" to significantly alter a cover that was already shown to the public, and the sales tool of printing one book with several covers was not as yet part of industry marketing strategy.

Covers Are Important!

Most industry professionals feel that the cover is actually the most important part of a comic book. An exciting cover almost always assures successful sales. But back in the early days of comics, this lesson took some time to be learned, as evidenced by DC's *Action Comics*. Readers would approach newsstand dealers and ask for the comic with Superman inside, and it wasn't until *Action* #19 that DC got the message and featured Superman on all *Action* covers.

According to Simon, publishing the best possible book was the most important consideration and a cover would be easily substituted at the last minute if the publisher thought that it would make the book more interesting and increase sales. It must also be remembered that this was the first look that readers had of a new team. First impressions do much to dictate a new title's acceptance by the public and the Simon and Kirby cover of *Young Allies* #1 that was eventually published seems more focused than the Avison & Gabrielle collaboration that was originally featured in the ads. The heroes without super-powers are clearly in danger and in addition to smashing the villains, Bucky and Toro have arrived in the nick of time to save their teammates from a "piercing" death. They were allies in the fight against fascism and allies to each other.

Further analysis of the cover reveals that the flag may not have been necessary. While it is true that the country was gripped in a patriotic fervor (and most titles displaying the American flag sold well), the word "Allies" on the cover probably made the flag somewhat redundant and added to the clutter.

In fact, the title portion of the original cover flew in the face of accepted practices of the day in other respects as well. Most publishers printed the title of a book against a solid color background, in effect, a marquee. The original *Young Allies* cover printed the title without any separation from the action. It's the accepted norm today, but it was a radical change for Timely. Obviously too radical, as the marquee-style cover eventually prevailed.

THE ORIGINAL COVER (facing page) seems more frenetic and less balanced, in spite of the predominate use of the American flag to frame the title. On the final cover (above), Hitler and the Red Skull play off of… but do not up-stage… Bucky, Toro, and the rest of the Young Allies.

While the two covers have similarities, comparing them is like comparing a "rough draft" with a "polished" final. We will never know how many copies *Young Allies* #1 would have sold with its original cover. But one thing is certain… the first issue, with its now familiar and famous cover, went on to become one of Timely's greatest successes. Thanks for reading and happy collecting. ■

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Plenty that are still undervalued...

In compiling this month's data from the various dealers and collectors that I speak with on a regular basis, I'm hearing a familiar song. I'm hearing a split in the market, in which one half is lamenting the high cost of collecting and their possible departure from the market. The other half is celebrating these escalating prices, because it is bringing fresh and much needed books to the marketplace. They feel that in relative terms, comic books are still vastly undervalued collectibles when looked at in terms of their scarcity, their attrition rate, their popularity, and the number of collectors versus supply. The other side looks at the 100% plus run-up of Gold and Silver in the past five years, and feels that the market is becoming overvalued

When looking at other collectibles markets, one can see the true place of comics My belief is that comics still have a very long way to go Oh, I'm sure I'll receive a lot of calls offering up plenty of valid evidence to the contrary, but for every overpriced book, there are plenty that are undervalued. I certainly hope we aren't losing long time collectors because of these new market levels (as some are suggesting)... but regardless, sellers that I spoke to are still moving books just as briskly as ever and to more collectors than ever.

Golden Age As I write this, the 1995 1/2 Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide Update is not out, but sellers are experiencing a pick up in sales because of the overwhelming assumption that Golden Age prices are going to be listed higher If this prediction is true, some are suggesting that present prices now are really not so bad. Schomburg Airbrush covers still lead the way, and dealers lament the fact that not that long ago they sold these books very, very, slowly at $25 - $60 in high grade.

Thrilling Comics #63 FN $200, #68 VF+ $400; Detective #67 FN++ $1,495; Whiz Comics #12 NM- $1,000; Master Comics #29 VF++ $1,200; More Fun #68 about VF+ $1,150, Human Torch #6 VF $1,700; Submariner #12 FN/VF $1,250, Black Terror #13 VG+ $75, #20 FN $150; Marvel Family #1 VF $2,300; Adventure Comics #36 FN $725; Uncle Sam Quarterly #1 VF $1,695; Superman #35 FN $695; All New #8 VF/NM $695; Crown #1 FN/VF $515

Silver Age The comeback (if it ever went away) is here... and it looks like it's here to stay! High grade DC books are bringing new highs and moving briskly. Marvels are predicted to be right behind them as we head into the new year. Dealers are reporting more and more inquiries into the DC War books, even to the extent that they believe that Our Army At War is shaping up to be the Timelys of early 96. Spectre, Showcase, Brave and the Bold, Metamorpho, and the Batman books are becoming hot

Spectre #1 NM $95; Showcase #57 & #58 GD $18 ea., #60 FN $80, #73 VF/NM $95; Atom & Hawkman #39 & #40 $40 ea.; Star Spangled War Stories #139 NM $70; Phantom Stranger #4 NM $28, Our Army At War #115 VF+ $70; Plastic Man #1 MT $90; Mission Impossible #1 VF $75; Brave & Bold #54 VF/NM $200, #25 FN $110, Justice League Of America #55 NM $65; Amazing Spider-Man #15 VF+ $350, #42 FN $50; Thunder Agents #1 NM $120; Aquaman #1 FN $135, Captain America #100 NM $245; Magnus #1 VF+ $195.

1946-1953 Material Between these years, and reaching back into the Golden Age, collectors are looking for books that are unique, scarce, and guiding at low prices. A great many feel that although this market has experienced collecting interest and popularity before, it's still "on the ground floor " They feel that there are a huge number of undiscovered and under appreciated books in these years, and they are going to be in on the revitalization of this era.

Sales have been frantic on the best

continued on page 71

MARKET REPORTS

JOE MANNARINO
Christie's Comic Collectibles
New York, New York

Christie's kicked off its Comics Collectibles weekend with a gala party that featured a host of living legends. The list of luminaries included: Stan Lee, Joe Simon, Dick Ayers, Joe Sinnott, John Romita, Al Jaffe and Stan Goldberg. The party was held at Christie's East amid the many items that would be auctioned over the succeeding two days and a good time was had by all

The Friday sale featured works by all publishers and artists. Saturday was the first Marvel Art and Collectibles sale and featured animation and memorabilia as well as original comics and art.

Golden Age Comics

Two copies of Batman #1 exceeded estimates, the first a restored FN- (60) went for $10,350. and the second copy, a VG+ (49) sold for $8,625. also sold was a low grade Whiz Comics #2 (#1) $5,520, Submariner #1 GD- (21) $2,070; Wonder Woman #1 restored FN- (59, restored) $200700, and Batman #2 FN+ (72) $2,990

Golden Age Eye Openers

Superman #2 in FN (64) estimated at $1,500-2,000 realized $4,830; a lot containing Suspense #8 and Catman #29 (with classic L B. Cole covers) in Very Fine (84) estimated at $600-$800 sold for $3,220

Trends:

Disney sold exceptionally well as a rare copy of the first edition of Mickey Mouse Magazine (V1/ #1) sold for $3,680 and two copies of Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #1 also sold.

(*Continued on page 70*)

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MANHATTAN CONTINUED

Fawcetts
The sale included a comprehensive private collection of Fawcetts, most were in average grade… they ALL sold!

Pulps
The Walter Gibson collection of pulps and related material was offered. Gibson (under the name Maxwell Grant) created the Shadow and was one of the most prolific writers ever. A bound set of Shadow pulps estimated at $4000-$6000 was purchased for $9,775. All other pulp lots showed strong sales.

Silver Age
A familiar trend continued… demand remains strong for high grade unrestored material. A group of Showcase comics from the Bethlehem Collection (consisting of issues #22-24) sold for $11,500. Other sales included Fantastic Four #1 VF+ $8,625; Spider-Man #4 NM $2,300, #5 NM $2070, #8 NM $1840; #9 NM $1150.

Silver Age Eye-openers
Silver Surfer #1-18 NM sold for $2,530, six Merry Marvel Marching Society Tee-shirts $1,840, a pair of Marvel sweat shirts featuring the Hulk and the Thing $1,380. Marvel memorabilia did great across the board.

Original Art
Kirby was again King with 26 of the 28 lots that sold exceeding mean estimate. Highlights included a pin-up page from Avengers #2 $8,500; Fantastic Four #5 page 5 #5,980; pin-up from FF #34 $5,520, Journey into Mystery #112 page 12 $2990. Ditko, Wrightson, Barks, Stanley, and examples of oversized Silver Age art also did very well. Cover re-creations by Dick Ayers, Joe Sinnott, Joe Simon, Chic Stone, Gil Kane, John Buscema and other Marvel artists all sold. Romita's Spider-Man #40 $5,750, Sinnott's Fantastic Four #57 $4,025, and Dick Ayer's Fantastic Four #1 $3,450.

Joe's Didja Know??
In over 20 years of working with and on Jack Kirby's art, inker Extraordinaire Joe Sinnott and Jack Kirby only met once?

JOHN CARUSCINSKI & BRUCE ELLSWORTH • TROPIC COMICS

Greetings from the surf capital of the world. We just bought a Super-large Superman collection containing over 700 items. Highlights. George Lowther book w/dj (primo shape); two Crusader rings, Supe's wood jointed toy doll, Superman Speed board game (1940s) Superman tie (MOC), carnival figure, playsuit w/box (1954) watches, film viewer and more!

Ducks overseas are HUGE! They can't get enough. Recent sales WDC&S #31 GD $700, Marvel Mystery #33 VF/NM $1500; Sub-Mariner 18 FN $600; Giant Size X-Men #1 VF $275; Amazing Spider-Man #2 FN+ $1200.

Remember READ what you buy…seeya!

GREG WHITE • COMIC BOOKS & COLLECTIBLES • KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA

Comic books are selling at a reasonable pace. Although nowhere near the levels of a few years ago, we are holding our own and hope to make headway as we enter the New Year. I am optimistic that back issue sales will return to previous levels and once again hold their own along with sales of new product.

Silver Age (1955-1969) We had a good month in regard to the sale and purchase of Silver Age Marvel and DC. High grade books continue to be in demand. We have had a number of requests for copies of X-Men #1 and Tales of Suspense #39. We were able to pick up a nice group of mostly higher grade Marvels dating 1963-1966. Many have sold. I also have demand for pre-1965 Showcase and Brave and Bold (no surprise there). It is tough, however, to maintain a stock of such books. The Silver Age market is healthy in regard to high grade… hopefully lower grade material will sell better in 1996.

Recent Sales: Fantastic Four #7 VF $450; Avengers #1 VG $395; Spider-Man #39 VF/NM $150; Showcase #39 VF $195; Go-Go #1-9 $95 for the set!

Golden Age (1935-1955) Not as many sales this past month. Lots of interest in the books but not enough money to go around. Certain key Golden Age comics will always bring a quick sale but the majority of them fall into the "Gee that's nice, but I don't have the money" category. We picked up one group of 1,400 books in October. Our mail order is doing reasonably well and help to broaden our mail order base.

Recent Sales: Mystic #1 FR/GD $895; More Fun #60 VG/FN $350; Daredevil #32 VG $400.

Original Art and Toys We have not sold much in that area lately but we have purchased quite a bit. Our recent acquisitions include a selection of Disney animation drawings, Disney strip art, a nice group of 1960's Corgi die cast vehicles, and GI Joe dolls. Although this area of our store is not as active as comic book sales, we continue to build our stock.

Recent Sales: Mickey Mouse cel $295; Pecos Bill animation drawing $100; Corgi Batmobile car $175; group of 1960's GI Joe dolls $395.

That's our late Autumn report. Have a Merry Christmas!

GREG PHARIS & DAVE GRISEZ
San Diego Comics and Collectibles
San Diego, California

Ho, Ho Ho! and welcome to our holiday report. The X-mas season is upon us in California, (you'd never know it, the last day of November, I'm in shorts and its 80 degrees!), and our slowly recovering economy is still being effected by the Grinch! Soapbox item: will the publishers ever listen to us when we ask them not to release huge amounts of product all at the same time (usually on the last week of the month… right before our rent is due on the first!)

Our customers/readers will always buy Silver Age when priced appropriately. DC Silver Age, especially the Superman family, sprouts wings (like Hawkman) and flys right out the door. Some recent examples: Metal Men #1 FN+ $175; Sea Devils #1 FN $130;World's Finest #81 GD $22, #93 FR $10; Action #212 GD $20; Plastic Man #1 (1967) VG+ $15; Tarzan #51 VF $40; Adventure #218 GD $25; Amazing Spider-Man #100 VF $150. Consignment sales: Zago #4 VF+ $125 (a steal), Zago #2 (Matt Baker cover) solid FN $45 (another steal); Beware #10 (Frazetta cover) $60.

Older 40s and 50s toys do sell quickly and is a growing part of our business. Lady and the Tramp record (1963) $25; Mego Hulk (8") $60, Mego(8") Batgirl $225; Star Wars has cooled a bit due to the new versions hitting the stores but a loose Royal Guard has gone for $18; carded (Jedi) Boba Fett $100. A new toy that is very cool is the WWII commemorative GI Joes. They debuted nationwide at Target for the retail price of $15...sold out in a matter of hours and are now on the secondary market anywhere from $40-100 each!

A joy filled, healthy holidays and happy New Year to all…see you in '96!

material, and dealers are looking to satisfy this ever growing demand for these books. Reports hold that there just isn't enough to meet demand, and this genre is more scarce than was previous believed. S.O.T.I. and pre-Code horror books lead the way, with good girl poised to move into the top spot. When pricing these books, the guide is usually thrown out the window, and most sellers are reporting that many multiples of guide does not bring even the slightest resistance from buyers.

My Love Stories #3 VF $85; Walt Disneys Comics & Stories #98 FN $125; Mystery In Space #4 NM $735; Buddies In The Army #1 VF/NM $195; Terrors Of The Jungle #21 VF $210, Strange Tales #6 FN $160, Do You Believe In Nightmares? #1 FN $115; Adventure #150 VF+ $300, Western Comics #8 VG/FN $95, Secret Loves #2 FN $85, Phantom Lady #13 NM- $3,400, #17 G+ $1995.

1970s Books What is it that is making the early 1970s such an exciting period for collectors? Why are collectors so willing to pay extreme multiples of guide? Why are we hearing so much about this new "Bronze Age" of comics? Perhaps it is because of the 25 plus factor (once a collectible gets to be 25 years old it starts to be in demand), the low print runs, and the low prices.

As a "test" I ran an advertisement in the CBG last month with only four books for sale. They were in high grade, and were priced fairly. I received 186 calls from collectors for these four books! When I asked them why they were so interested in the early 70s, their answer was almost uniform They said "I want to participate in the honest-to-goodness first-time "discovery" of a genre." They believe they are in "on the ground floor" of a whole period of books.

Since very few of the books have been broken out and "ranked" by desirability (or even price), this group of avid collectors is enjoying discovery after discovery of scarce titles and issues. In many cases, fandom is just now becoming aware of just how elusive and rare some of this material actually is. Sure, it's not the Golden Age or Silver Age, but it is a whole decade of generally undervalued and interesting comics… mostly at bargain basement prices!

Amazing Spider-Man #124 NM $38; Night Nurse #4 NM $25; Swamp Thing #1 VF/NM $72, #7 NM $30; Star Trek #61 VF/NM $40; Star Wars #1 NM $32; Strange Sports Stories #1 VF++ $12; Brave & Bold #100 VF/NM $32; Werewolf By Night #32 MT $125; Dead Of Night #11 MT $12; Hulk #141 VF/NM 415; Phantom Stranger #23 NM $9; Sword Of Sorcery #1 MT $5; Marvel Premiere #1 NM $45, #15 NM $90;; Tarzan #230 VF++ $12.

We all want to find that treasured issue and not have to pay an outrageous sum… and we hate to have to compete against out-of-control speculators. That, along with just plain old fascination, is why many collectors find themselves "lured" to new ground

Some years back, 1950's material was in "limbo" in spite of the fact that it contained an incredible amount of outstanding material. Then, almost overnight, 1950's books became appreciated and sought after

I think there is a parallel situation in "Bronze Age" comics. There is no doubt it has a strong and enthusiastic following that is growing rapidly. And the real proof of its growing popularity and value is the fact that even some Golden Age and Silver Age collectors are beginning to reconsider collecting the 70s.

As always, it boils down to the two most fundamental comicdom mantras "True Worth is what each individual collector places on each individual book!" and "Buy what you enjoy!"

Every time I'm startled by a new record price. I'm reminded of what I use to think about values just a few short years ago. "Are you the nut that is paying double guide for a NM- Seven Seas #5?" Looking back now, everyone envies your foresight .. and that's why I feel comfortable saying that this hobby is still literally fraught with bargains yet to be had!

Have a great holiday season, and may we all find a subscription to CBM in our stocking. ■

HERE'S WHAT I THINK!

CRAIG R. RADER, TEXAS
Combination Grades Rebuttal

I wanted to take the time to respond to your recent editor's intro column in *CBM* #29, in regard to the ongoing grading issue in our field. Although I want to avoid encouraging or perpetuating an "us and them" type mentality in regard to how collectors choose to go about grading their books, I'm nevertheless going to have to risk doing that in responding to a number of your comments with which I disagree rather strongly. As I am sure you will appreciate, I'd like to argue rather aggressively in an attempt to disabuse some false impressions which may well have inadvertently been given by some of the comments in your Letter From The Editor about how the folks in our camp (those who use FN/VF, VF/NM, etc.) view what you refer to as "combination" or "in-between" grades. Let's address the various aspects of it. First, let's take your definitional reason for not accepting VG/FN, FN/VF and similar animals, as valuable as that might be.

Gary, your whole argument on the definitional basis only holds up as long as we all accept your basic premise that FN/VF is, indeed, a "combination" or mid-grade.

I do not. I have always considered FN/VF to have been something qualitatively different and distinct from that which is above it (Very Fine) and that which is below it (Fine). As such, it often takes years of practice to accurately apply this grade (not mid-grade) to books, in a consistent and reliable manner. We are not looking for an invisible demarcation line between two grades which does not exist. Rather, we accept FN/VF as a discernible entity which represents a bona fide grade in itself. As such, we who use it are not just doing so because we haven't the experience to decide upon either Fine (FN) or Very Fine (VF). Furthermore, we gain specificity in using FN/VF as a discrete category. As Keith Contarino (and many others) have related, grading is really an art and a not a science. To quantify it by attempting to assign non consecutive numbers (in a range) for each grade, is bound to confuse things over time for collectors. Generally, no two, or three, or ten people are going to agree that a book as Fine 65, or VF 75, or whatever number you want to assign it. However, many experienced collectors in our field will come to agreement upon a particular book as being within the category of FN/VF. (See John Warren's original descriptions of grade categories.)

In essence, Gary "we" have never accepted the basic premise that there are just eight grades (rebels that we are!). When I saw your take on that term "combination grades" in your column, I immediately went AARAGH! That does not accurately represent "our" position and starting point in the matter.

Secondly, your point about the potential for misuse of VF/NM is well taken, as I acknowledge that overgrading has been rampant in our hobby, unfortunately. Yes, most books graded VF/NM and even NM, turn out to actually be VF or VF+ copies. But perhaps most of the grading abuse goes on within the numerical range of the NM category as you define it. To me, NM has always been just one thing: nearly perfect... with perhaps a few, almost imperceptible flaws. However, by allowing such an extended range as delineated in the *Overstreet/Carter Grading Guide*, you make yourself vulnerable for people to assign NM (which by definition should be NEAR PERFECT) to books which have three, even four significant defects! You made a statement, as valuable as that may be, that you often did not know if a VF/NM was closer to VF or NM. Gary, I wonder now what dealers mean by NM 95 or NM 90. Just how many flaws and defects is this supposedly NEAR MINT item going to have, when I claw open the mail order package?! Assigning a non consecutive numerical range to something that's supposed to be near perfect opens up a whole Pandora's Box for grading abuse, and puts those of us who strive to maintain the integrity of the NM concept, at a great disadvantage.

A book that is VF has considerably more wear than one which is NM. As such, there must be something "in-between" the near perfect and the relatively more worn. That something is not an "in-between grade", but rather, a separate category with criteria all of its own: VF/NM. As you have it now, the leap is too great between the two grades of VF and NM. Gradations into the upper range (end) of VF should not culminate into that which is (or should be) NEAR PERFECT. An accurately graded VF+, as beautiful as it may be, should not be adjacent to NM. To do so dilutes the true meaning of "almost perfect". Gary, as I am sure you will appreciate, I have been avidly collecting again as an adult since 1989, and I don't believe I have ever graded one of my Silver Age books as solid NM. Most are, as you correctly point out, VF or VF+, or medium grades.

Gary, my wish would be that you print some perspectives similar to this one so as to more accurately represent the viewpoint(s) of those of us in the other camp, on this grading controversy. Similarly, I'd really like to hear Dr. Contarino's bent on all of this. Gary, the man

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RICHARD HAUSER, CALIFORNIA
Grading Is Seductively Subjective Instead Of Purely Objective...

I read with interest your exposition of views about heterogeneous grading of comics, and it stimulated some thoughts of response submitted humbly herewith.

It would be very desirable and gratifying to all concerned to be able to apply an unerring standard to grading condition accurately and make the result in a black-and-white matter given the way condition can greatly affect value. But, we are dealing with shades of gray.

When one considers the wise words of Ernie Gerber in his prestigious *Photo Journal Guide to Comic Books* regarding grading, there comes a realization that, as he puts it, grading is "in the eye of the beholder." It is seductively subjective instead of purely objective. His experiment at the 1987 San Diego Comic Con showed that ten books he had assigned a grade to, given to 50 hand-picked-by-him dealers and collectors, resulted in them grading the books in a highly variable way over a spread of three or four of the eight major grades!

Even when presumably unbiased, astute, professional graders evaluate the same book, the results can easily differ by 10 points or more of the 100 point scale. For instance, look at the spread of points given by the committee that grades for the Sotheby's auctions and throw in Bob Overstreet's opinion for more drama. The sensational *AF* #15 which sold for a Silver Age record price at SOTHEBY'S is exemplary. You said in an editorial before the auction that it was hard to believe it had survived in such high grade. Bob Overstreet said in a Market Report after the auction, that it was a VF 80's issue. The Committee ranged around NM, but certainly there were differing opinions in this gamut of evaluators. When we apply this spectrum of possible serious expert grades to the 100 point grading scale, it is obvious that a comic could grade one or even two grades apart based upon the "eye of the beholder." Thus, assigning a grade-range to a sensitive value book seems to be a rational approach. It would be a real stretch to grade something FN/NM of course, and not to be recommended However, one could argue that also!

To further complicate the real world process, there is little doubt that the present owner of a book has a strong subliminal tendency to grade it higher than a would-be buyer.

Now, assigning a plus (+) or minus (-) as a suffix to grades as you advocate still requires a finite determination be made. The mathematics of the equation of grading are a sliding-scale, though, and very elusive to pinpoint. That makes a finite grade unlikely to be valid, reliable, and reproducible. We are trying to achieve the admittedly desirable goal of making the "art of grading" into the "science of grading", including the use of +'s and -'s affixed to the eight major grades (Poor through Mint). But the scientific method is based on valid, reproducible results... regardless of the investigator. Regrettably, such results are significantly unobtainable by a group of experienced graders.

So, therefore, I am in favor of "combined" grades, which is to say that what one knowledgeable person honestly sees as a VF, another may honestly see as a NM. Shades of gray, as opposed to black and white.

I do on the other hand also believe that a person who is a seasoned comics pro, such as yourself, could see black and white. But for the majority of us weekend warriors who try to scale the dizzying heights of our avocation, the weekend warrior susceptibility applies. We are not in constant training and conditioned enough to avoid mistakes in perception (not to mention corrective lenses being used properly). This can have injurious effects if the exercise if pushed too far.

Reality: What a concept! Cheers...

MATT NELSON, LOUISIANA
Will the real first appearance of Sub-Mariner... please stand up! The debate over which came first—*Marvel Comics* #1 or *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* #1–continues!

Many collectors may remember the beginning of what would be the biggest controversy ever to hit comic fandom. In 1974 a very rare comic called *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* (*MPFW*) was discovered. In it was a story featuring Namor, the Sub-Mariner—the same story that appeared in *Marvel Comics* #1! Since the discovery of *MPFW* #1, the question has arisen of which issue, either *MPFW* #1 or *Marvel Comics* #1, claims the true first drawn appearance of the Sub-Mariner.

With such a limited amount of existing copies of *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly*, sales of this book for the last decade have been almost nonexistent, and the debate had been all but forgotten. But, before the silence fell upon the debate, it seemed that *MPFW* #1 was the winner.

Until now.

The fire of controversy was rekindled by a new copy of *MPFW* #1... the so called "pay copy". Once its contents, and the contents of the *Marvel* #1 pay copy were dissected and digested by a contingent of Sotheby's Grading Committee members, many new arguments were raised, this time supporting *Marvel* #1 as the first appearance of Subby.

So now it is the time to lay to rest any doubts of the legitimacy of *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* #1. This article will show why *MPFW* #1 was initially established as the legitimate first appearance of the Sub-Mariner... and why, even now, amidst a mountain of doubt that has been smoldering for twenty years, it still stands as first!

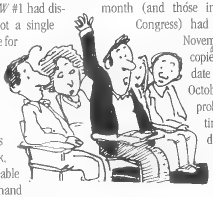
How was this conclusion reached? What exactly did happen in 1939? These answers, and more, will be answered in this article.

The Discovery

It all started in 1974 when a new comic book, which had never been seen by any collector before was discovered. The title of the book was an awkward one—*Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* (try saying that in one breath!). Six copies of this comic (one missing six pages) and covers (only) to the next three issues had been unearthed in the estate of Lloyd Jaquet shortly after his death.

Examination of *MPFW* #1 revealed black and white contents with a copyright date of 1939 (no month given). Among the adventure and humor strips inside, was one feature that shocked the collecting world—an eight page origin story of Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner! The clincher was that these same eight pages had appeared in *Marvel* #1. The only difference being that an additional four pages had been added and the story appeared in color.

Despite *MPFW* #1 having no month of publication, collectors and historians were quick to establish that it had preceded *Marvel* #1 in 1939. Because of its claim to Sub-Mariner's first appearance, and its rarity, *MPFW* #1 quickly became one of the most expensive comics on the market. The incomplete copy sold for $2,000 that year, $2000 more than what *Marvel* #1 was worth in NM and only $800 less than an *Action* #1 in NM! By the early 1980's all of the copies of *MPFW* #1 had disappeared from the market. Not a single copy was publicly offered for sale for the next decade and, as a result, the price for *MPFW* #1 did not rise for many years.



Contents

Recently a new demand has developed for this historic book, and copies once again are available on the open market. A new demand has also developed for the age-old controversy over which book came first. As a result of the discovery of the pay copies of *Marvel* #1 and *MPFW* #1, compelling arguments have arisen in both Warren Reece's article in *CBM* vol. I #21 and Roger Hill's article in *Overstreet Monthly* #2. What is to be presented in this article is one of the most in-depth investigations to date of the controversy surrounding these books. But, before we delve into the debate, let us examine the contents and publication of these two books.

In 1939, publishing companies did not have artists to create comics, even though they had the financial backing to print them. On the other hand, the art studios had a stable of artists who could package whole comics, yet lacked the financial ability to publish them. Publishers needed art studios just as much as art studios needed publishers. (Eventually these two entities merged to form more comic book companies.)

In the making of *Marvel* #1 the art studio was Funnies, Incorporated, headed by Lloyd Jaquet, and the publisher was Timely Publications, headed by Martin Goodman. The contributing artists included Bill Everett (Sub-Mariner), Carl Burgos (Human Torch) and Paul Gustavson (Angel).

The copyright was submitted in June 1939 and payments were made to the artists in late July 1939. *Marvel* #1 was officially published on August 31, 1939 and copies reached the stands around September 15, 1939 (the arrival date on the Mile High copy). Also in September, the Library of Congress received copies of *Marvel* #1 and *Marvel Mystery* #2. (There is some speculation *Marvel* #1 was never copyrighted simply because of the title change to *Marvel Mystery Comics* with issue #2.) The copies of *Marvel* #1 on the newsstand that month (and those in the Library of Congress) had a cover date of November, yet some copies exist with a cover date of October. These October issues were probably printed some time in August and distributed to a few test markets. After this, the October date was covered with a black circle and a second, larger print run was made in September.

Some time in 1939, Lloyd Jaquet decided to try his hand at publishing a few of his own comics. The publishing company he created was First Funnies, Incorporated and his first comic was *MPFW* #1 (the contents of which were supplied by inventory from Funnies, Inc.) When Jaquet packaged the comic it was intended to be distributed through theaters as a weekly giveaway, and a few preliminary copies of *MPFW* #1 were sent out to prospective theaters. No one knows if any other copies were distributed, or if Jaquet had intentions to use *MPFW* #1 as his first published issue if the giveaway succeeded. The movie houses rejected the idea, and all plans for *MPFW* were canceled. *MPFW* #1 was never copyrighted and no records exist for the date of publication of creation of this comic.

The controversy lies in whether Jaquet packaged *MPFW* #1 or *Marvel* #1 first. Unfortunately the key players, Jaquet and Everett, have passed away. We can only rely on the evidence of the comics themselves

The Debate

There are four arguments against *MPFW* #1 coming first:

1) Everett's use of craftint paper, combined with color, to produce an underwater effect.

2) Everett's payment for his Subby story through *Marvel* #1, not *MPFW* #1.

3) Claims made by collectors who had owned both books in 1939 that *Marvel* #1 came first.

4) Legitimacy of *Marvel* #1 as a "true" comic which was both copyrighted and distributed.

Let's examine each of these four arguments:

Use Of Craftint Paper

When Everett drew the first Sub-Mariner story he wanted to create a murky underwater effect. This was accomplished by using a newly developed paper called craftint. A special chemical

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compound could be applied to this paper resulting in a dot pattern, which added a "shading effect" to the art on the paper. Craftint paper was used primarily for black and white comic strips. Everett, however, combined it with color to produce a blended mixture, achieving the desired underwater effect. This evidence supporting *Marvel* #1 appeared in an interview with Bill Everett conducted by Roy Thomas in the early 1970's. Everett's intent was for the Subby story to be in color, as it appears in *Marvel* #1. How could the black and white contents of *MPFW* #1 be considered as the first appearance of the Sub-Mariner, when, in fact, it would have been preposterous for Everett to expect any of his art to appear in a black and white comic. By 1939 virtually all comics on the newsstand were printed in color.

There are many loopholes to this evidence. It is possible that Everett had absolutely no knowledge of Jaquet's attempt to include the Subby story in *MPFW* #1. This is supported by the time span in which Everett completed the feature. The Subby story in *Marvel* #1 is twelve pages. It seems that the first eight pages were drawn separately from the last four. The art on the last four pages is of a somewhat lower quality, as if Everett rushed them. The time span between the pages eight and nine is unknown, but Everett did sign and date page 8..."4/39". The time span between the completion of page eight and the publishing of *Marvel* #1 exceeded four months. During that four month period Jaquet could have conceived his publishing company, First Funnies, and attempted to create a comic using material already completed by his art studio. After *MPFW* #1 failed, its contents were placed back into the inventory of Funnies, Inc., available for use at a later date. When *Marvel* #1 was conceived, Everett was instructed to add four more pages to the Subby story, thus making it a full twelve pages.

Another argument involving craftint deals with the actual "reprinting" of the Subby story from *MPFW* #1 to *Marvel* #1. Some claim that the murky effect from the craftint paper would make it impossible to shoot the printing plates for *Marvel* #1 directly from the pages of *MPFW* #1. When Jaquet disassembled *MPFW* #1, the original art for the stories was retained. This explains the question of how the plates were shot to print the Subby story in *Marvel* #1. The eight pages are not actually "reprinted". Both books had the story shot directly from Everett's original art.

Pay Copies

Since 1974 two more copies of *MPFW* #1 have surfaced. The last discovered proved to be the most significant of all eight existing copies. It was found in 1992 in the estate of Lloyd Jaquet, along with the "pay copy" of *Marvel* #1. They were used by Jaquet to serve as a record of payments to the artists for their features. In the margin on the first page of each story are notations identifying the creator of that story, the check number, the amount of the check, the date the check was written, and the number of pages paid for. In some cases the order was changed or some information was missing. A breakdown of payments in each pay copy is as follows:

Marvel Comics #1

7/25/39 Burgos (Human Torch) check #106
$128.00 16 pages
7/31/39 Thompson (Kazar) check #108
$120.00 12 pages
7/31/39 Gustavson (Angel) check #109
$64.00 8 pages
7/31/39 Everett (Sub-Mariner) check #110
$83.25/$96 12 pages
7/31/39 Dixon (Jungle Terror) check #111
$48.00 6 pages
7/31/39 ? (Burning Rubber) check #113
$5.00 story
7/31/39? (Burning Rubber) check #114
$3.00 illo
7/31/39 Paul (Cover) check #115
$25.00 cover
no date Mahon (Masked Raider) check #202
$72.00 8 pages

Motion Picture Funnies Weekly #1:

7/28/39 Filchock (Kartoon) check #107
$8.00 4 pages
8/22/39 Jack Cole (Cover) check #102
$10.00 cover

The payments above seem to indicate that *Marvel* #1 came first simply because the artists were paid for its contents and practically no one was paid for their work in *MPFW* #1. Furthermore, the payment to Everett for his Subby story lends credence toward the assumption that the story first appeared in *Marvel* #1. Or, to quote Roger Hill, "why would Everett be paid first for what was published second?" But let's examine these payments closely. All of the artists were paid for their work in *Marvel* #1 on July 31, 1939 with the exception of Carl Burgos, who was paid six days earlier. All artists were paid at a rate of $8 per page with the exception of Thompson, who was paid $10 per page, and Mahon, who was paid $9 per page. The one pay entry that is most confusing is Everett's which reads exactly:

Check #110 83.25 L Jac 32 7/31/39 #110 64
96.00 paid 12 pgs

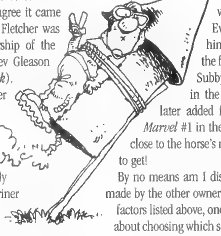
It seems there are **two** payments made to Everett on the same check: one for $96 and one for $83.25. While the $96 divided by the $8 per-page rate works out to 12 pages, the $83.25 amount makes absolutely no sense. Furthermore, two seemingly arbitrary numbers appear in the statement: 64 and 32, which, when divided by the $8 per-page rate gives us 8 pages and 4 pages, the lengths of the two parts of the Subby story in *Marvel* #1. This indicates that Everett did in fact draw the last four pages separate from the first eight.

There are other peculiarities involving the pay copy of *MPFW* #1. Many features such as "American Ace" (7 pages), "Spy Ring" (6 pages), and "Jolly the Newsie" (6 pages) have no pay records on the first page. The one story which does have a record is Filchock's Kartoon story (4 pages), but the amount paid was $8—a rate of only $2 per page! Also payment for the cover art is confusing. Even though the name "Schwab" is signed on the original art for the cover, the check is written to Jack Cole! Both Schwab and Cole worked for Funnies, Inc. and their styles were similar. It is possible that Cole had a hand in drawing the cover and was thus paid his share of money, but it is clear that Schwab drew most, if not all, of the cover of *MPFW* #1. Stranger still, the check written to Cole is #102, the lowest number of all the checks listed, and is dated 8/22/39, almost a month after all the other checks!

The key to this puzzle is "published." Because *MPFW* #1 was never "published" (outside of a small test area) and only Marvel #1 reached newsstands and the Library of Congress. But the debate is not which one was published first, but which one was packaged and printed first (in any quantity). In 1939,

artists were not paid until their stories were packaged and sold to publishers who printed and distributed them. Because *MPFW* #1 was never sold nor printed nor distributed, it is remarkable that payments were made for any part of it.

Therefore, even though Everett was paid for the Subby story when *Marvel* #1 came out, it does not prove that *MPFW* #1 came second. In fact, it's quite the opposite! Another of the features in *MPFW* #1 (Spy Ring) appeared in *Silver Streak* #1 (Dec. 1939). The pay copy of *Silver Streak* #1 (also found in Jaquet's files) lists the payment to Jay Fletcher for this story. Because *Silver Streak* #1 is dated December 1939, most people would agree it came out after *MPFW* #1. Once Fletcher was paid for Spy Ring, ownership of the story was transferred to Lev Gleason (publisher of *Silver Streak*). Once Everett and the other artists were paid, the contents and copyright of *Marvel* #1 were transferred to Timely Publications. Jaquet's only chance to use the Sub-Mariner and Spy Ring stories in his own comic was to package it before he sold them to Timely and Lev Gleason, respectively. Once the companies owned the stories, it was legally impossible for Jaquet to use them to make money for himself.



Statements Of Owners

How does one refute the seemingly rock hard evidence of owners of both books in 1939 who say *Marvel* #1 came first? These owners most likely acquired their first copy of *Marvel* #1 off the stands in September 1939. Most personal accounts read "I bought my copy of Marvel #1..." When *Marvel Mystery* #2 hit the newsstands around October 20, 1939, any unsold *Marvel* #1's were probably pulled to make room. These owners' only chance to buy a copy of *Marvel* #1 was during that one month period. After October, *Marvel* #1 could only be acquired second hand (by trading for example). Because *MPFW* #1 was never sold, these owners could only have obtained their copy when theater owners gave their advance copies away. In this way, an owner could have obtained his copy of *MPFW* #1 months after buying *Marvel* #1.

The only one who could offer a substantial personal account of which book came first is someone involved in the creation of both books, or who knew someone who was. I believe that there is one person who can give the best account of what happened at Funnies, Inc. in 1939. George Kapitan (who was involved with Funnies, Inc. at the time and is credited with the idea of *Green Giant Comics* #1) wrote a letter which appeared in *Overstreet Quarterly* #2. In the letter, he stated that, many years ago, he had a conversation with Bill Everett. Everett told him that he had drawn the first eight pages of the Subby story for *MPFW* #1 in the spring of 1939 and later added four more pages for *Marvel* #1 in the fall. That's about as close to the horse's mouth as we're going to get!

By no means am I discrediting any claims made by the other owners. But, because of the factors listed above, one must be very careful about choosing which story to be accurate. In Warren Reece's article a Mr. Lahmann claims to have owned *Marvel* #1 first. I conducted an interview with a collector named Roger Nelson (later in this issue), who claims he owned *MPFW* #1 first. Both collectors have nothing to gain from inaccurate accounts, but one of these statements has to be wrong! Information coming from an insider like Kapitan seems to be the most reliable evidence to date.

Distribution And Copyright

Some people say that *Marvel* #1 came first because it is registered and copyrighted with the Library of Congress, thus establishing it as a "legitimate" comic book. *MPFW* #1 is not copyrighted nor was it distributed. A quote from Warren Reece's article in *CBM* #21 states that this is the, "...strongest argument on which book had come first, and on which book had come out at all!" Unfortunately, the argument is not which book was distributed first, but which book was *created* first. Both *MPFW* #1 and *Marvel* #1 do exist, they are both true comics, regardless of whether one was distributed or copyrighted, and the other was not. We also know that these two creations were printed (albeit one print run was shorter than the other) as there are multiple copies of each book existing. What needs to be proven is which of these "true" comics was conceived first. That is the argument.

The Ashcan Misconception

Some consider *MPFW* #1 an ashcan. Indeed, the back cover is a solicitation to movie theater owners, and the comic was not initially intended for distribution. This does not make it an ashcan. Ashcans were created specifically to secure copyrights to a title and/or character of a future comic book. The ashcan cover is black and white and the interior contents are, either, miscellaneous pages from previously printed comics (in color), or all new material (as in Flash/Thrill ashcan). No copies of *MPFW* #1 were sent to secure copyrights and the contents are quite the opposite of an ashcan... the cover is color and the interior is black and white! The possibility also exists that Jaquet intended to publish *MPFW* #1 exactly as presented if the idea had succeeded with theater owners. With this evidence in mind, it is conclusive that *MPFW* #1 is not an ashcan of any sort.

Arguments Supporting MPFW #1

Now that the arguments for *Marvel* #1 appearing first have been discussed, we turn to the other side of the debate. Two arguments can be presented supporting *MPFW* #1 premiering first... the dreaded "box" theory, and a new idea recently brought forth by Jon Berk which deals with the dimensions of *MPFW* #1.

The "Box" Theory

By and far this evidence most strongly supports *MPFW* #1 coming first. For years, collectors were baffled by a small blank box in the last panel on the eighth page of the Sub-Mariner story in *Marvel* #1. When *MPFW* #1 was discovered, the words "continued next week" were written in that box. If *Marvel* #1 had been packaged first, why put a blank box on the eighth page of the Sub-Mariner story? I find many supporters of *Marvel* #1 avoid this evidence, and rightly so, as I cannot see how it can be disproved. *MPFW* was intended to be a weekly, but because *Marvel Comics* was a monthly, the lettering, but not the box, was omitted.

The "Size" Theory

Previous to packaging comics for Timely, Funnies, Inc. catered to other publishers, of which one was Centaur. Many stories in Centaur comics were created by artists employed by Funnies, Inc. (Everett's Amazing Man, for one) and even a few covers were drawn by Fred Schwab and Jack Cole. A small number of comics published by Centaur and Funnies, Inc. deviated in size from the regular dimensions of other comics. Three books in particular were smaller in size: *Little Giant Comics* #4 (February 1939), *Little Giant Detective Funnies* #4 (January 1939) and *Uncle Joe's Funnies* (published September 15, 1938). Their dimensions were roughly 6.5" x 9.5". It just so happens that *MPFW* #1 has those same dimensions. More than prove that *MPFW* #1 came before *Marvel* #1 this information can possibly pinpoint when *MPFW* #1 was packaged. Examination of the publication dates of the three Centaur books shows that they range between September 1938 and February 1939. Everett's completion of the eight page Sub-Mariner story was dated April 1939. With the Centaur dimensions still fresh in his mind, Jaquet probably packaged *MPFW* #1 shortly after Everett completed those eight pages. No other comics packaged by Funnies, Inc. were of that size.

This theory is very new and deserves more intense investigation in the future.

Theory Of 1939

Funnies, Inc. was busy packaging comics for publishers such as Centaur in the late 1930's. In early 1939 Jaquet requested that Everett create a new super hero. Everett began work on a story featuring the Sub-Mariner. An eight page origin story was completed in April 1939. About this time Jaquet conceived an idea to not only package comics, but to publish them as well. Selecting certain stories already completed by his team of creators, Jaquet packaged *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* #1. He had Fred Schwab draw the cover and then proceeded to print a few copies and send them out to theaters as "a preview".

Had the idea worked, he would have had the comic copyrighted and printed more copies to distribute to selected theaters. The theatre managers did not feel that the idea would work and rejected the comic. Jaquet then disassembled *MPFW* #1 and placed the stories back into inventory (this is probably mid-1939). Shortly thereafter, Jaquet is approached by a new publisher (Timely), to package a comic book the eight page Sub-Mariner story, among others, is used in the *Marvel* #1 package. Jaquet realized he needed four more pages to complete *Marvel* #1 and assigned Everett to draw a "finish" his eight page introduction. Once *Marvel* #1 is copyrighted and published, Everett and the others are paid for their stories.

All rights and privileges to the Sub-Mariner story now belong to Timely Publications.

In Conclusion

The case for *MPFW* #1 coming first still stands. No one else has come up with an alternative reason explaining the blank box on page eight of the Subby story. As I said before, this box is the hardest to refute and in the single most important evidence supporting *MPFW* #1. The size of *MPFW* #1 seems to corroborate that it was created in early 1939. The arguments in favor of *Marvel* #1 prove to be inconclusive, unsubstantial or (when examined properly) actually support *MPFW* #1.

The purpose of this article is not an attack on *Marvel* #1, nor is it an attempt to raise the worth of *MPFW* #1. I have neither a vested interest in *MPFW* #1 or *Marvel* #1. In fact, the importance of *Marvel* #1 should never be overlooked. It is the first "Marvel" comic book ever, and that is undisputed! Because of the immense effect Marvel comic books have had on our industry over the last 30 years, *Marvel* #1 rightly deserves its exalted status in the Golden Age of comics. The purpose of this article is simply to offer an answer to a question that has perplexed collectors for a long time. Hopefully, fandom can one day find the truth of what really happened in 1939.

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42 Missing Favorites

By Matt Nelson

When Gerber was producing the *Photo-Journal*, he decided to take the whole concept further by making it more than just a "picture book". He also provided, among other things, a "scarcity index" for each comic. This insightful idea provided the industry with estimates of the number of copies of each issue still in existence.

When the *Photo-Journal* was released in 1989, the market value of certain books classified as "rare" by the scarcity index began to escalate. Most of the "white space" covers (covers Gerber was unable to locate and photograph in time for publication) were automatically assigned a scarcity rating of 7 (20–100 existing copies) or 8 (11–20 existing copies). A few of the white space comics were "low impact" (less interesting) covers, such as *Frisky Fables* #10 and #14. They were rated a 6 or 5 because not as much emphasis was placed on locating them, and thus were not as scarce. Some of the white space covers were adamantly pursued with no success, exemplifying the term rare, and were rated a 9 or 10 (1-5 existing copies).

Gerber was amazingly successful in locating and photographing an incredible number of complete runs, but on occasion a cover here and there eluded him. On the extremely rare titles sometimes two or even three covers proved elusive. Examples of runs with more than one "white space" include: *Famous Funnies* #9 and #35; *Captain Aero* #9 and #26; and this month's topic, *Four Favorites* #24 and #26. *Blue Beetle* #21 and #43... and *Silver Streak* #22, #24 plus the nn (no number) could be included here, but *Blue Beetle* #43 and both *Silver Streak* #22 and #24 reportedly may not exist. As a result, *Four Favorites* holds the distinction of being the only Superhero title having two covers absent from the *Photo-Journal*.

Four Favorites was published by Ace comics, notorious for putting out a number of "second-tier" characters featured in several "second-tier" titles during the 1940's. Because of what was viewed by the collecting community as "lackluster art" and "sub-par superheroes" Ace titles have taken a back seat to the likes of *Batman* and *Captain America*. Despite the later issues faring well in the late '40s–early '50s esoteric market, earlier Ace comics have long been out of the collector focus... thus actually rarer than the average Golden Age title. In this respect, it's surprising there are only three Ace covers missing from the *Photo-Journal*.

When comparing the two missing *Four Favorites* covers, most collectors feel that the #24 has more compelling (and collectible) art. Set against a black and yellow background, Magno and Davey try to stop the demon-like villain in the foreground from killing his victim with his "music box of death". The distorted, grotesque image of the villain combined with the little skulls drawn into the music notes are just two elements that give a horrific overtone. In contrast, the cover of #26 is significantly tamer. Set against a gray background Magno saves Davey from certain disaster just in the nick of time... a "typical" superhero scenario. Despite having a cover that leaves much to be desired, *Four Favorites* #26 is just as rare as #24, and just as sought after by serious collectors who seek out material absent from the *Photo-Journal*. Both #24 and #26 rank an 8 (1–20 existing copies) on Gerber's scarcity index.

Having searched for these books for the last year I've come to realized that, as with other white space books, *Four Favorites* #24 and #26 are quite elusive. During the last twelve months or so, I've seen three copies of #24 and two copies of #26 for sale (at reasonable prices). All but two of these five issues were described as being in Good to Very Good condition and sold quickly.

This is not surprising, when one realizes that these two comics guide at only $80 in Near Mint! Now that mainstream Golden Age is leveling off, many market analysts are suggesting that the next "boom" area will be second-tier companies and esoteric comics. But regardless of market trends, no one is arguing that the present Guide value on these two books is low or that copies of *Four Favorites* #24 and #26 will likely be snapped up at many multiples of *Guide* once fandom realizes what a real bargain they are... especially compared to DC's and Timely's! Good hunting and happy collecting! ■

FOUR FAVORITES #24 (JUL 1946) sports a rather interesting cover... with most fan interest focused on the Oriental mad scientist with the "Spock" ears in the lower right hand corner. Actually quite scarce this classic cover has received little notoriety because of its absence from the *Gerber Photo Journal*.

FOUR FAVORITES #26 (Nov 1946) also hails from the post-Golden Age... and like *Four Favorites* #24, is extremely difficult to find. Although issues of Four Favorites published after WWII were not heavily collected during the 1970s and 1980s, interest in and demand for this title (and all publications by ACE) has increased markedly during the 1990s.

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